

Big Bill Thompson, Chicago, and the Politics of Image

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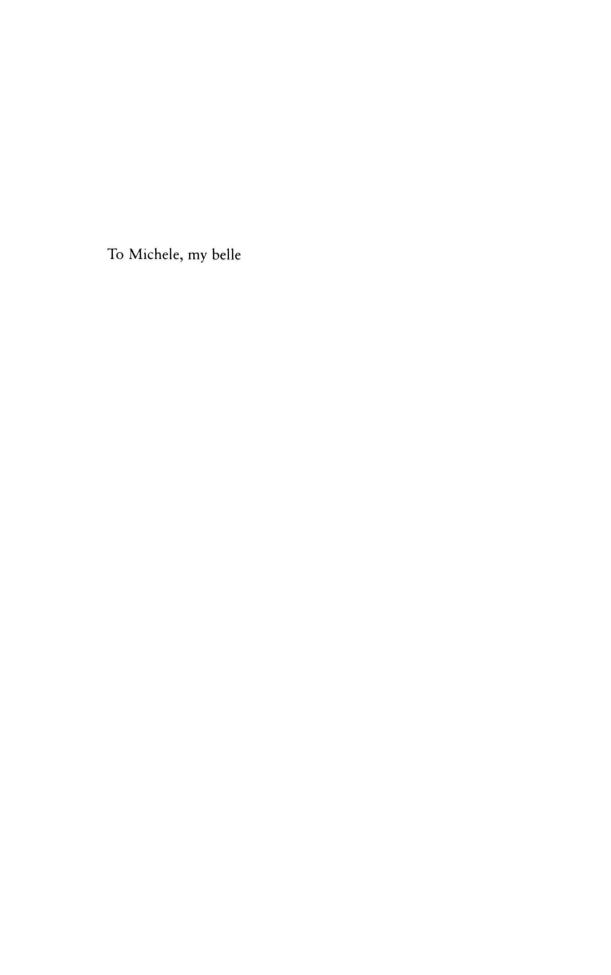
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Acknowledgments

If in fact Mies van der Rohe believed God is in the details, he must have found a way to skirt the hell of endnotes; the author acknowledges responsibility for all errors there and in the text. Still more were avoided through the guidance of Perry Duis, Richard Fried, Melvin Holli, Leo Schelbert, and Arthur Thurner. Their patience together with their example have made for a better work. And, like Blanche Du Bois, I have depended on the kindness of strangers, especially those who staffed the libraries and manuscript collections utilized. These people also helped much, as did Archie Motley and Ralph Pugh at the Chicago Historical Society. Rarely do wit, wisdom, and friendship mesh as they do at the manuscript collection of CHS.

This project would have been impossible without the involvement of an executive editor at the University of Illinois Press. Richard Martin had the opportunity—and the cause—to take a pass on a book about a long-dead Chicago mayor. He did not, and for that I am grateful.

Introduction

The downtown of Burnham and Jahn, Mies and Sullivan is bounded on the north and the west by the Chicago River. Sixteen bridges span that obstacle to development and sometimes-green body of water. Because it is Chicago, the most partisan of cities, the bridges double as public works and political statements of the first order. That is why the dedication plaques are so important, especially those ten that read: William Hale Thompson, Mayor. He is Big Bill of the cowboy's Stetson, enemy of kings and friend of gangsters. At least that is what the newspapers printed in fashioning a legend.

The legend himself does not allow for easy revision. Time has yielded new sources, yet nothing to flesh out Thompson's personal life or two nervous breakdowns. He came from Boston, where Martin Lomasney had counseled fellow politicians: "Don't write what you can talk; don't talk when you can nod your head." Thompson offered a variation on that advice. He spent a career talking (as any demagogue would) without revealing anything of himself.¹

A Thompson biography tends to be short on praise, as perhaps befits a politician who so often found offense in the written word. Popular accounts of the 1920s generally treat him as a form of entertainment, an object of scorn, a civic morality play, or a combination of all three. The only nota-

ble work with a different approach is Eliot Ness's *The Untouchables*, in which Chicago's mayor appears not at all. Apparently, space devoted to Thompson was space denied to Eliot Ness.

Thompson has been the subject of three biographies, starting with John Bright's *Hizzoner Big Bill Thompson: An Idyll of Chicago* (1930). Bright cast his subject as the chief participant in a jumble of alliances, elections, and scandals. There is little sense of how exactly Thompson succeeded or why the electorate in any given year would see him as a rational choice. Bright is best read as a disciple of Mencken and his alienation from democracy. Bright wrote that Thompson appealed to "the anthropoid mind" of voters; they are not much different from Mencken's booboisie.²

Like Hizzoner, William H. Stuart's The Twenty Incredible Years (1935) offers up a mix of scandals and elections, but with a difference. Stuart wrote as a true believer, the only journalist of stature ever attracted to Thompson. Political editor at the Chicago American, Stuart doubled as Thompson's advisor. The pro-Thompson owner of the paper probably did not mind his employee's moonlighting; William Randolph Hearst understood the lure of politics. Stuart later wrote the biography of Richard W. Wolfe, Thompson's commissioner of public works and himself the author of a pamphlet with the intriguing title Lemke or Stalin—Which?

The most thorough and balanced account of Thompson comes in *Big Bill of Chicago* (1953) by newspapermen Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt. Rich in detail, *Big Bill* is marked by a discernible sympathy for its subject and a healthy suspicion that not everything said about him in the press was accurate. These were positions that required considerable courage. Journalists were not supposed to dissent from the editorial positions of publishers, not matter how dated. This was especially true for Wendt, who worked as an editor at the *Chicago Tribune*, where Col. Robert R. McCormick ruled in his reactionary dotage.

However good, *Big Bill* is incomplete. It presents Thompson the rascal while ignoring the politician who calculated his way to victory. Also missing are such disparate elements as Eamon De Valera, the Justice Department, and Kenesaw Mountain Landis, all of which affected the course of Thompson's career. But Kogan and Wendt were journalists who wanted to tell a good story. In that they did not fail.

In addition to his biographies, Thompson is a staple in works on Chicago crime, as are inaccuracy and hearsay. These books are like coral, insignificant by themselves but adding up to a great—and even dangerous—mass. This applies in particular to the "literature" on Al Capone, a subject about whom the rules of rigorous scholarship do not seem to apply.

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Fact rarely gets in the way of these narratives. So a biographer from 1930 says Capone had a picture of Thompson on his office wall, and the story gets repeated thereafter. But what if the charge were made up to embarrass Thompson politically? How trustworthy is the source? Is there a photograph of the office? For how long will the apocryphal be confused with the historical?³

Scholars have had their own problems with Thompson, much of it personal. Not every reformer in Jane Addams's Chicago was a professor, but it seemed that virtually every professor voted for reformers. Charles E. Merriam also wanted to be mayor, only to lose as the Republican candidate in 1911 and be crushed by Thompson in the 1919 party primary. Eight years later, Thompson used Merriam and the University of Chicago as foils in his campaign for a third term. "Perhaps Mencken is right," Harold F. Gosnell consoled Merriam. "The people usually vote for crooks."

A student of Merriam's at the University, Gosnell would later write a book on Chicago politics; in it, he identified Thompson as "a good clown." Merriam eventually found refuge by working for the New Deal, as did Gosnell and Harold Ickes, Merriam's campaign manager from 1911. Ickes boasted in his autobiography that the unsavory characters of Chicago politics "helped to sharpen my teeth for Mussolini, Hirohito and Hitler." Merriam was less charitable. He found that Thompson represented "a principle of degeneration in the political world." Either way, progressive-minded people did not think well of Big Bill Thompson or his milieu. And they carried those sentiments wherever their careers took them.⁵

Later generations of historians have perpetuated this bias, as if out of professional courtesy. Daniel J. Boorstin has written that Thompson "helped Capone lay the foundation of all his enterprises," while Irving Bernstein found, "Organized crime, operating with the connivance of the Thompson regime, ruled Cook County as no American metropolis has been controlled before or since." But saying is not proving. If Thompson helped in any substantive way, there should be abundant evidence, along with the realization that Chicago and Cook County are not one and the same.⁶

Thompson was nothing if not a demagogue. Sometimes, as when a mayoral candidate warned in 1919 of "the Hohenzollern cult of power" at city hall and condemned "the false crimes of 'Kamerad, Kamerad'" that Thompson and former governor Charles Deneen uttered, opponents tried to imitate him. Although the rhetoric belonged to Charles Merriam, it does not appear in his biography by Barry D. Karl. Instead, Karl wrote, "The campaign was a brutal display of tactics for which Merriam and the progressives were totally unprepared."

Reinhard H. Luthin devoted a chapter to Thompson in his study of twentieth-century demagogues. Luthin despised politicians who "pandered to the passions and prejudices, rather than the reason of the populace, and performed all manner of crowd-captivating tricks, only to betray the people." It is Bright, Gosnell, and Mencken all over again. The people get what they deserve. Such prejudice may explain why Thompson did not receive much attention during the revival of urban history in the 1960s and 1970s. Chicago was at it again, at least for the progressive scholar, with its attraction to Richard J. Daley. Would these people never learn? Better to ignore their political tastes than encourage them.8

The only real exception was the work of John M. Allswang. Writing in the 1970s, Allswang appeared as a kind of Nostradamus, suggestive of the details that someday would mark Thompson revisionism. Allswang noted which groups supported Thompson in a particular election and what motivated them. He understood the fluid nature of that support and suggested the importance of class as well as ethnicity and race in Thompson's appeal. If Allswang downplayed how much both the Depression and the extreme decentralization of local government affected Chicago politics, it is to be expected. Nostradamus never claimed to bat a thousand.⁹

The political Thompson really is not that hard to figure—he was a theatrical extension of the cowboy and the athlete. Thompson truly loved being a cowboy in Wyoming and Nebraska. He spent parts of ten years out West beginning at age fourteen; only his father's death forced a return to Chicago. Back home, the young man found that he needed a substitute for life on the range. The city had cattle, but the Union Stock Yards stripped them of all romance. Thompson instead turned to sports, where he excelled at water polo and football.

This was during the last years of the nineteenth century, the era of amateur sports. Thompson had a Ruthian thirst for acclamation that could not as yet be quenched. Because they came later, Red Grange and George Halas were able to make a living out of the game Thompson could only play at. And since he threw punches sparingly, professional boxing was out of the question; a generation of Chicago politicians no doubt would have preferred Kid Thompson to Big Bill. So Thompson moved on to politics, which combined a game's excitement with the chance to recycle bits of the West. The old cowboy got to wear his Stetson and ride a horse for pleasure as well as votes.

Politics became Thompson's new sport with the GOP his field of play; it could not have been otherwise. Thompson was a WASP whose father had served with Farragut at Mobile Bay. Those were antecedents unlikely

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to matter much with Chicago's O'Dowds and Skoniecznys. But a good background did not of itself guarantee success in the Republican party.

Thompson came to full power and notoriety through a combination of intuition and nerve. He understood the Chicago of 1915–31 as a battle-field where classes, groups, and races warred with one another. Thus, he emerged as a kind of mercenary, ready to fight on the side that looked to be winning at any given moment. This was a risky strategy subject to sudden shifts of allegiance; opportunism rarely thrives from the wrong guess. Thompson survived thanks to instincts that could have been the envy of John "Bet-a-Million" Gates.

Thompson also mastered the politics of forceful inconsistencies: He contradicted himself without fear of confusion or embarrassment, as he did on temperance. In 1915 he enforced a Sunday saloon-closing statute that had been long honored in the breech. Naturally, he dismissed all critics. "When they say they want to block Thompson they are counting their chickens before they are hatched. They are not opposing Thompson. They are opposing an army." Twelve years later, that army had been routed, and Thompson was the mayoral candidate who said of his platform "you can't find anything wetter than that in the middle of the Atlantic." 10

Here was the soldier of fortune making the most of his talents. Thompson sensed changes in the electorate long before anyone else. He knew in 1915 that the WASP middle class controlled his access to power; in other words he could not play the game without them. When editorial writers predicted doom for a politician who cried over how dry he was, Thompson thought otherwise—the politically active WASP voters of 1915 had begun their trek to the suburbs. This allowed a candidate to be wet and still escape any backlash from those who remembered him dry.

Thompson did well by his hunches for sixteen years: The local Democratic party was slow to grasp the value of the balanced ticket, so he appealed to black and ethnic voters. Chicago business leaders sought to break the building trades in the 1920s, so the politician who once refused to meet with Sidney Hillman transformed himself into a friend of organized labor. Reformers constantly fought him, so Thompson learned to make an issue of them. Blue-collar voters had a way of treating the enemies of civil service as friends come election time.

Thompson also learned to use words the way most politicians depended on organization. The detail work of politics mostly bored him. Where other mayors sought ways to control the city council, Thompson simply tried to overwhelm it—and all opposition—through his demagogy.

It was on display in 1927 as he campaigned for a third term. News sto-

ries reported the constant attacks on the University of Chicago and King George V of England, who would be punched "on the snoot" if he showed himself along the shores of Lake Michigan. Most critics thought the performance entertaining if irrelevant. They did not understand.¹¹

When Thompson said "king," his audience translated it into "boss," "foreman," or "North Shore." And when he said "university," they thought of a hostile place that used nonunion labor on construction projects. A year later, the dean of the university's divinity school commented, "The spectacle of Al Smith the Catholic crying for tolerance seems to me no more reasonable than the spectacle of Smith the Tammanyite shouting for government reform." The demagogue never lacked for kernels of truth.¹²

Thompson's third term was steeped in the local and national politics to come. His efforts as mayor were nothing short of Daleyesque: public works for the business community; recognition of blacks and ethnic groups; and patronage for the asking (on proof of loyalty). No predecessor in city hall had ever managed all three. And yet Thompson left office in 1931 a political Moses. Denied a fourth term, he could only look upon the Promised Land of local one-party rule; the Depression barred entry to any politician found to be Republican. Thompson's fate was to spend the last thirteen years of his life watching Democrats appropriate his formula for success.

Unlike Wall Street, Thompson sensed that Jazz Age prosperity would not last forever; it was as though he anticipated the next decade's politics of protest. He befriended Huey Long; proposed a platform of regional public works coupled with isolation from European affairs; and planned to put radios into Chicago classrooms to broadcast lessons on Americanism, Thompson-style. Thompson may even have debuted some of the Depression's extremist rhetoric. "Well, we got a great philanthropist in this town, and he is a Jew," he said of Julius Rosenwald in a speech from March 1931, "and he is trying to edge his way out of hell by giving [away] part of the money he steals." 13

Thompson experienced at least four political incarnations: the reformer; La Folette-like Senate candidate; experimenter with new constituencies, occasional demagogy, and Prohibition enforcement; and urban demagogue. Along the way he also recast Chicago's image, for the worse. By the time Thompson first entered office, Americans had long since embraced the Jeffersonian notion of society. The ideal communities were small, pristine, pastoral. Few cities, least of all Chicago, qualified by virtue of their size, filth, and overwhelming sense of modernity. Whatever would Jefferson have made of the B-train or Automat?

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Chicago was Pittsburgh squared, hell with the lid off, and then some. A swampy settlement of 50 souls in 1830, it had grown to nearly 1.7 million by century's end. Everything about it was modern, from the way people made fortunes to the killing efficiencies of the Stock Yards. If extreme Jeffersonians rejoiced when the new Sodom burned in 1871, its phoenix-like rebirth must have stunned them. Chicagoans were aware of their city's reputation and hoped to improve it through the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

The results were mixed. Most everyone was impressed with the neoclassical fair grounds, which spurred the City Beautiful movement. Still, the image of the old, unruly Chicago persisted. The English reformer William T. Stead visited and was aghast at what he found. "The sovereign people may govern Chicago in theory," Stead wrote in his exposé *If Christ Came to Chicago*, "[but] as a matter of fact King Boodle is monarch of all he surveys." ¹⁴

Stead could have done a series of such books, with the Almighty equally distraught over Schnectedy and Emporia. Modernity touched these places, too, with electric lights and automobiles, to say nothing of growing class distinctions and political corruption. It was just that Main Street seemed less threatened with Chicago to act as scapegoat.

If anything, Thompson expanded the role when he criticized American involvement in World War I. Suddenly, Americans had a sanctioned metaphor for urban dysfunction. Chicago was the place of disloyal labor agitators and socialists, of people with hyphenated loyalties or subscriptions to a newspaper that preached racial equality. Atlanta, Boston, and Minneapolis were without sin, or so the citizens of those respective cities were free to rationalize. Everything bad resided in Chicago. It said so on page one.

The image intensified in the 1920s, with or without Thompson in office. Other places suffered from corrupt police and gangland killings, but reading about Chicago's was somehow therapeutic. Most Americans probably were convinced that a city disloyal in war would act the same during Prohibition. The newsreels and Hollywood added pictures to complement the prejudices—film of Capone as he appeared outside of court and how he would look if Edward G. Robinson or Robert DeNiro played the part. This perception of Chicago endured for more than half a century. Finally, in the 1990s, one media-driven image replaced another. Demagogue gave way to demigod, scandal to sport.

And the real Chicago continues as always, hovering just beyond range of the camera.

The approach taken here is that of political biography. Institutional response, thematic approach, and overarching interpretation all have been subordinated by the at-times idiosyncratic author pursuing his always-idiosyncratic subject. Those disappointed would do well to remember that history is what happens to people, over time.

And the story is told best when it includes a civic purpose, as Charles and Mary Beard argued nearly seventy years ago: "The history of a civilization, if intelligently conceived, may be an instrument of civilization." Historians for too long have busied themselves with arcane arguments wrapped in the passive voice. The public deserves better. If those with the training cannot be bothered to engage a broad audience, journalists and filmmakers will, inevitably, take their place. Who outside of the convention and travel industry would notice or complain?¹⁵

Big Bill Thompson was a part of the city my grandparents encountered as immigrants. He may have amused or outraged them; he did not overwhelm them. After all, they had left the Old World to become Chicagoans, and South Siders at that.

Notes

- 1. Martin Lomasney quoted in James Michael Curley, I'd Do It Again: A Record of All My Uproarious Years (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1957), 22.
- 2. John Bright, *Hizzoner Big Bill Thompson: An Idyll of Chicago* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1930), xiii.
- 3. The picture story appears in Fred Pasley, Al Capone: The Biography of a Self-Made Man (New York: I. Washburn, 1930; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries, 1971), 349; John Kobler, Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 172; and Laurence Bergreen, Capone: The Man and the Era (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 294. Bergreen's is the most serious of the Capone biographies.
- 4. Copy of Gosnell to Merriam, Feb. 28, 1927, Harold F. Gosnell Material, Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.
- 5. Harold F. Gosnell, *Machine Politics: Chicago Model* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 11; Harold L. Ickes, *The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 111; Charles E. Merriam, "An Analysis of Some Political Personalities I Have Known," 6, ms., Chicago Historical Society.
- 6. Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Democratic Experience (New York: Random House, 1973), 83; Irving Bernstein, The Lean Years: A History of the

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American Worker, 1920–1933 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1966; reprint, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 297.

- 7. Merriam comments in *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1919, and *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 24, 1919; Barry D. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 97.
- 8. Reinhard H. Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954), ix.
- 9. John M. Allswang, A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890–1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), and Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), chap. 4.
- 10. Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 131, 248.
 - 11. Punch, Chicago Tribune, Feb. 19, 1927.
 - 12. Shailer Mathews quoted in Chicago Tribune, Oct. 16, 1928.
 - 13. Thompson speech, Mar. 19, 1931, Merriam Papers.
- 14. William T. Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago* (Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1894; reprint, Evanston: Chicago Historical Bookworks, 1990), 172.
- 15. Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: MacMillan, 1930), vii.

Cowboy to Commodore

[Old man Lonigan] puffed away. A copy of the *Chicago Evening Journal* was lying on his side. It was the only decent paper in town; the rest were Republican.

-James T. Farrell, Young Lonigan

THE CAMPAIGN STARTED three days before Christmas, 1914. The time and place—Chicago's Auditorium Theater, possessed of perfect acoustics and tasteful ornament—made an ideal backdrop for the politician crafting a new image. A male quartet sang carols, and a Christmas tree stood decorated with petitions bearing the signatures of 140,000 voters. On a stage so appropriately set, the actor gave his performance. "Relying upon the sincerity of your pledges to support me," William Hale Thompson promised, "I accept the commission you offer and do now announce my candidacy for mayor of Chicago." The papers did not report any attacks on British royalty.¹

Thompson won his election, and Chicago in time became synonymous with its political chameleon *sui generis*. From 1915 to 1923 and again from 1927 to 1931, city hall was home to a politician seemingly immune to scandals, critics, and laws of political logic. Luck began at birth, on May 14, 1867. Thompson came into the world on Boston's Beacon Street to a father who served with Farragut at Mobile Bay; it was the stuff of campaign biography, even if the father was only Farragut's paymaster. And there was another advantage, as Thompson himself admitted. He was christened William, a name fit for politics and quite unlike that of his younger brother, Percival.²

Had Medora Gale and William Hale Thompson Sr. stayed in Boston, their son and James Michael Curley might have become political rivals. Instead, the family moved in 1868 to Chicago, where the mother had family, and Boston was denied a Big Bill to complement its Last Hurrah. Like other newcomers, Thompson Sr. sought his fortune in Chicago real estate. When the Great Fire struck in October 1871, it spared the Thompson block on West Madison Street. Winds blew Thompson Sr. the good fortune of being one of the few landlords in the downtown area with anything standing to rent. On his death twenty years later, he left an estate valued in excess of \$2 million.³

Chicago apparently agreed with young Bill Thompson. He exhibited skills as a horseman and leader, although neither transferred readily to Fessenden Preparatory School. From there, the plan had been for him to go back East to attend Exeter and Yale. However, an encounter with the law at age fourteen allowed the boy to travel in a different direction.

In the spring of 1881, Thompson was leading a group of companions on horseback across the State Street bridge; they were chasing an imaginary Indian war party. The attendants did not appreciate their bridge being used for a game while the Chicago River approached its spring flood stage. After a scuffle, the boys were arrested and jailed.

Thompson's father secured his release, along with an apology for the arrest from Mayor Carter Harrison Sr. Afterward, the younger Thompson proposed a deal: Rather than attend boarding school, he would work as a grocery clerk until he saved enough money to go West. The father relented, and the boy grew up impressed by the advantages of political—not Ivy League—connections.⁴

Thompson ventured West that autumn. He left home earlier, arrived in the West younger, and stayed longer than the twenty-six-year-old Theodore Roosevelt, who wrote history while he ranched in the Dakota Badlands from 1884 to 1886. Making his way to Cheyenne, Wyoming, as an assistant train brakeman, Thompson landed his first job on a nearby ranch. If reality differed from the life described in dime novels, the young Thompson (a wagon driver and cook's helper) did not complain. He divided his next six years between a Chicago business school in winter and life out West the rest of the time. By twenty, Thompson had affected the custom of wearing cowboy outfits on the streets of Chicago.⁵

In 1888 Thompson's father purchased a 3,800-acre ranch at Goose Lake in western Nebraska; he appointed his son manager. For three years the younger Thompson enjoyed the life of a rancher. He bought new stock and introduced Herefords to improve breeding; planted the necessary crops and

put up new ranch buildings; and, when time allowed, he rode the range and drank to excess. In summer he also staged bank robberies, gun fights, and kidnappings for friends visiting from Chicago. The Thompson lore of the West included a killing (fiction) and one exceptional performance in a barroom brawl (fact), three men knocked unconscious with the help of a cue stick.⁶

Thompson moved back to Chicago in 1891 following his father's death. In three years, he had turned a \$30,000 profit on the ranch; by contrast, Theodore Roosevelt lost \$20,000 on his operation over the eleven years he owned it. Yet the value of the West for both men lay elsewhere. As politicians Thompson and Roosevelt exploited their roots in the real—and, for most voters, the imagined—West. Throughout 1912 Roosevelt made statements and embraced ideas that appeared un-American, or at least not Republican. When he praised labor and condemned the courts as no other candidate had before, Roosevelt made sure to do it at Osawatomie, Kansas; it was a place of both the West and American history.⁷

Thompson did the same with Big Bill Day at the rodeo, both in East Las Vegas, New Mexico, and closer to home at Soldier Field. He also made full use of the West's readiest symbol, the cowboy hat. His trademark Stetson connected him to a frontier past that fascinated urban audiences. They liked William S. Hart in the movie Westerns, and sometimes they wanted a bit of the West in their politicians. The candidate could be a Chicago machine politician or a New York reformer, Big Bill Thompson or Fiorello H. La Guardia. The Little Flower's ten-gallon hat recalled a youth spent on army posts in South Dakota and Arizona.⁸

At age twenty-one Thompson was not ready to run for mayor or assume any of the images of Big Bill he was to fashion. He took to politics slowly and balanced it with other activities. Managing his father's business interests required time, but not immense amounts. So Thompson was free to find a substitute for his old life out West. The cowboy became an athlete, one of the most celebrated in late nineteenth-century Chicago.

He joined the Chicago Athletic Club in the early 1890s and captained the water polo and football teams. The club became a power in both sports, and Thompson coached the football team to a national athletic club championship in 1896. He earned his first nickname—Fighting Bill—for punching an opponent who fouled him in water polo. With the athlete's six-foot build, his name evolved into Big Bill and made the transition to politics.9

Club fame was more than a matter of wealthy men at play. Twenty years before Babe Ruth ever took the pitching mound for the Red Sox, sports had acquired a significance far beyond the playing field. When Thompson

won a football championship, he brought glory to Chicago; when he suspended six players the day of the big game for violating their amateur standing, he proved, especially for the predisposed, the link between character and sports. The *Chicago Tribune* reported, "Thompson says the Chicago Athletic Club has taken a stand before the world for clean football," and few upper middle-class Chicagoans disagreed. For them sports offered the same kind of test as the frontier and early city. One generation fought the Black Hawk War, the next built the slaughterhouses, and the third learned the intricacies of the flying wedge.¹⁰

Eventually, though, sports becomes a matter of diminishing returns, especially for the body. Thompson may have reached that point in 1900. He decided to run for alderman of the Second Ward on a dare from a fellow member of the Chicago Athletic Club. In the process, he found that politics generated the same kind of exhilaration as a barroom fight or football game. Only he did not hurt so much the day after.

Thompson's first campaign illustrated the contradictions that later became commonplace: The reform candidate of the Second Ward was nominated in a hall frequented by prostitutes and thugs following his suspension from the Amateur Athletic Union in a dispute over amateur standing. Luckily for the novice candidate, Chicago politics did not penalize players for relatively minor indiscretions or controversies.

And Second Ward residents were willing to forgive anyone who might act as savior. The ward included Prairie Avenue, where Marshall Field, George Pullman, and other wealthy Chicagoans had built their mansions in the years following the Fire. But by the late 1890s Prairie Avenue drawing rooms were in danger of becoming, literally, bordellos. The area already was in a state of slow decline when Ada and Minna Everleigh arrived from Omaha in 1899. The sisters intended to revitalize a house of prostitution located on Dearborn Street, only four blocks from Prairie Avenue.

For the next eleven years, the Everleigh Club grew famous as its proprietors applied modern advertising techniques to a very old profession. A promotional brochure in 1911 urged visitors to see Chicago's two greatest attractions, the Stock Yards and the Everleigh Club. When the club opened in the winter of 1900, Second Ward voters wanted someone who could make it go away.¹¹

The ward's Republican organization saw political promise in the young Thompson. He was wealthy, came from a good family, and possessed the reputation of a champion athlete. Either out of carelessness or in anticipation of victory, the nominating convention met at Freiberg's Hall and made its choice. While the Municipal Voters' League did not endorse

Thompson, he embraced the league's platform; William Hale Thompson supported civil service and municipal ownership. Residents were impressed enough to pick him over Democratic incumbent Charles F. Gunther by four hundred votes. During the post-election excitement, the league even listed Thompson in the reform column.¹²

Thompson won his seat because John Coughlin and Michael Kenna, the Democratic aldermen of the First Ward, willed it. Coughlin and Kenna were the legendary Bathhouse John and Hinky Dink, who together protected the Levee District's vice and prostitution from overvigilant law enforcement. As the district expanded into the Second Ward, the two needed a way to control it, and Gunther did not cooperate. They retaliated by denying him the First Ward's "flop house" vote, always of value in close contests.

The election of a political amateur offered distinct advantages; Coughlin and Kenna later convinced Thompson to vote for a redistricting ordinance that consolidated the vice areas into the First Ward. The ordinance also placed Thompson's residence inside the now-expanded First, where Republicans were encouraged to visit but not necessarily to run for office.¹³

Coughlin and Kenna probably took advantage of a preoccupied colleague. The young alderman had matters other than politics on his mind. Thompson had met Mary Walker Wyse, a secretary in his real estate business, and the two married in late 1901. Fourteen years later, Mary Thompson would witness her husband's first election to city hall.

While marriage was not required of big city mayors, a wedding ring helped voters find a connection with an otherwise distant politician. And if the marriage were a happy one, the public identified with the First Couple or, better yet, the First Family. James Michael Curley the family man garnered respect Curley the mayor could not. When death claimed Curley's wife and seven of his nine children, that respect deepened and even may have won him votes. The Thompsons' marriage was something less, without children and, in time, love.¹⁴

Despite the redistricting blunder, Thompson made good use of his two years in the city council. Whereas other politicians labor decades to cultivate a power base, he accomplished as much by sponsoring a single ordinance. It established the city's first municipal playground, located in a black section of the ward. Over the years, Thompson reminded black audiences of his long-standing concern for their welfare: "White people from nearby came over and said they wanted it [the playground] in their neighborhood. I said to this, 'I see you have a fine house and yard with fences around them and nice dogs but no children; I'll build a playground for children and not poodle dogs.'" 15

The truth was something else. As an athlete, Thompson naturally was drawn to the playground issue. It was an easy way to join settlement house reformers in the fight for public recreation. In terms of location, Prairie Avenue did not have a great need for teeter-totters. The ward's less prosperous residents and the more likely users of a playground happened to be black.

During his term in the city council, Thompson was a political amateur unaware of the importance of cultivating the black community. Blacks in 1900 comprised 16.6 percent of his ward's population and 1.9 of the city's. Had he lived in another ward, the measure might have benefited Chicago's tiny French or Belgian community, with Thompson fading into political oblivion. However, he was twice lucky, in his place of residence and in the coming Great Migration, when newly enfranchised voters were told of a white politician's concern.¹⁶

At the end of his term Thompson realized he had no ward. He considered getting his revenge by running against Coughlin in the next aldermanic election. The threat moved the *Daily News* to note, "It is pointed out that a man can not commit political suicide twice." Ultimately, Thompson agreed and accepted the offer by William Lorimer to run for the Cook County Board of Review.¹⁷

Thompson had attracted the attention of an important patron. Until his ouster from the U.S. Senate in 1912, Lorimer ran the strongest Republican organization in Chicago. To the *Tribune* and other critics, he was "a common ward machine politician" whose speeches betrayed grammatical problems. Physical attributes combined with political function to give Lorimer the nickname the Blond Boss.¹⁸

By choice or inability, critics missed the substance of Lorimer's importance. Lorimer was a politician who made sure to satisfy all constituents. Elected to Congress from the West Side, he represented a district with the greatest concentration of industrial employment in the United States. He dispensed jobs and favors to workers and gave his vote—whether for tariff protection or against federal meat inspection—to their employers. This attention to diverse if not contradictory constituent needs won him six terms in the House of Representatives (1894–1900, 1902–8). In May 1909, the Illinois General Assembly broke a four-month deadlock and elected him to the Senate.¹⁹

As Thompson would later, Lorimer proved that Chicago politics was anything but settled in the decades before the New Deal. Reform was not unknown to Chicago Democrats or machine politics to Republicans. Born in Manchester, England, Lorimer came with his family to the United States

as a four year old in 1865 and to Chicago five years later. Raised on the West Side, he began working at age ten. Lorimer first tasted politics working as a union organizer. He became a Republican ward committeeman in 1885; nine years later, he went to Congress.²⁰

Lorimer built the kind of organization more often associated with Democrats. He was an immigrant, a convert to Catholicism, and a coalition builder who reached out to Jewish voters. (As a paperboy, he lit Sabbath fires for Orthodox Jews who lived along his route.) And while he had few blacks in his congressional district, Lorimer worked to attract African-American support.

Nationally, Republicans were the party of Lincoln and the protective tariff, both abstractions that did not translate easily into urban, working-class districts. So Lorimer did as he was directed in Washington and as he thought best at home, where Chicago's population in 1900 was over 77 percent immigrant and second generation. The arrangement apparently satisfied most constituents.²¹

Reformers sought to win converts away from Lorimer with issues such as graft, civil service, and the party primary. While many were called, relatively few Chicagoans chose to become true believers. Instead, most voters allowed machine politicians to coexist with reformers. The urge to enlist in political crusades was tempered by the realization that only unreformed politicians fixed the tax bill and performed other favors. For his part, Lorimer protected his faction by grooming young, respectable protégés. State's Attorney Charles S. Deneen and Congressman Frank O. Lowden both started with Lorimer and both were elected governor. The Blonde Boss saw Thompson as another promising talent.²²

In a sense the relationship failed. Skilled in the art of party organization, Lorimer never impressed on Thompson the value of the precinct captain. Thompson often avoided the detail work of politics, and he was slow to accept Lorimer-style coalitions. Ironically, he developed in the area of his mentor's greatest weakness, personal campaigning. Unimposing before crowds, Lorimer utilized a 10,000-capacity circus tent to lend excitement to his rallies. On hand were speakers such as Mark Hanna and Robert G. Ingersoll.

Thompson was recruited for political tentwork in the 1902 election. He was at the time less a demagogue than a man who talked like a Percy, as his wife Mary recalled of their first meeting. To break him of such habits, a Lorimer subordinate sat in the front row with a brick in his hand. Whenever Thompson became too serious and risked losing the audience, James Pugh dropped the brick to the ground. Thompson quickly learned how

to keep the cue from falling, and he easily won election to the county board.²³

Thompson acquired two enduring issues from his apprenticeship with Lorimer. In 1902 a British newspaperman visited Chicago. The city struck him much as it had Rudyard Kipling, who once commented, "Having seen it, I urgently desire never to see it again. It is inhabited by savages." Thompson attacked the journalist in his tent speeches. He told listeners that as a cowboy he had found the English "all seedy and untrustworthy," and, ignoring that the one really was part of the other, he demanded stories on Chicago industry rather than its vice. The Anglophobia would return.²⁴

The second issue derived from Lorimer's relations with the press, especially the *Tribune* and the *Daily News*. The newspaper attacks were constant, and they may have prompted desertions by ambitious subordinates who did not want to be tarred as machine hacks. When Governor Charles Deneen drew close to *Daily News* publisher Victor F. Lawson in 1908, Lorimer complained, "Under their control it has never been possible for any man to get a Republican nomination unless he first crawled up the steps to Lawson's office and accepted the yoke." The comment worked a receptive audience as it relieved Lorimer's personal frustrations. Together, the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* contributed much to the legend of Chicago journalism. Reporters fought over stories, and publishers waged their circulation wars. Yet it was the points of agreement that came to benefit Thompson. The two largest dailies shared editorial prejudices that made them useful campaign foils.²⁵

Chicago was a city of immigrants and workers, yet neither paper seemed to notice. In 1884 the *Tribune* suggested food laced with arsenic as a way of dealing with the city's tramps. Six years later, the paper blamed high crime rates and low political morals on the Catholic schools. "What percentage of criminals and boodlers have been turned out by the Catholic parochial and what by the American free schools?" an editorial asked. Further, "What statesmen, what philanthropists, what examples of virtue or morality have come from the parochial schools?" When the prejudices crossed over into the twentieth century, they took on distinct racial tones. An article on the Great Migration included the headline, "Half a Million Darkies from Dixie Swarm the North to Better Themselves." African Americans were blamed in part for the conditions they encountered, and the *Tribune* offered details on arranging free return passage to the South.²⁶

In comparison the *Daily News* was free of blatant racial prejudice. The paper instead reflected the somber personality of its publisher. Victor Lawson was a Sabbatarian who refused to print the *Daily News* on Sunday or

sponsor free concerts that might interfere with Sunday school. "I will not go into, or be forced into, with those who are attempting secularization of the Sabbath Day," he warned the Orchestra Association on its plan to hold Sunday workingmen's concerts.²⁷

Lawson also had difficulties with opposing points of view. When employees said a pay raise meant more than a Christmas turkey, he stopped giving the turkeys; the practice resumed only when workers presented a petition expressing their gratitude. Lawson valued his right to be imperious; because they might interfere, he discouraged the spread of unions at his paper. The rights of labor mattered less to him than the ideal of good government. Lawson supported the at-large election of aldermen and made contributions in the paper's name to the middle-class Municipal Voters' League. Through the paper, Lawson envisioned a Chicago in which politics was nonpartisan. Personally, Lawson worked for the cause by compiling a list of 81 millionaires to fund a "citizens'" ticket in the 1891 mayoral race.²⁸

Both papers fought public corruption—and redefined it when necessary, as with the schools. From the start, Chicago schools had rivalled Chicago politics for notoriety. The first school fund was created by selling section 16 land allotted by the Land Ordinance of 1785. Proceeds of \$38,600 came from the sale of what became downtown Chicago; the episode established a precedent for shortsighted financial planning. What property the board of education kept it rented at terms agreeable to the lessee. The *Daily News* and the *Tribune* each held favorable long-term leases on prime downtown sites. The counsel of George Washington Plunkitt ("I seen my opportunities and I took 'em") was not for politicians only.²⁹

Thompson first baited the press in 1912. He was running for the Cook County Board of Review, which was empowered to hear tax disputes. Before the primary, Victor Lawson received an adjusted property tax on his mansion; the new tax bill, to balance out a previous overcharge, came to \$17.32. When Thompson found out, he ordered an aide to pay the bill and bring back the receipt. He then printed a campaign flier with side-by-side pictures of a mansion and a worker's cottage. The caption read simply, "\$17.32." The Daily News's explanation of the error could not stop the public from questioning the press's integrity. At times the newspaper business appeared less reputable than advertised.³⁰

This bit of populism did not give Thompson a victory in his first run for public office since 1902. Regardless, his political luck had just begun when Lorimer took the blame for the defeat. Accused of buying his 1909 election with a \$100,000 "jackpot," the Blond Boss was expelled from the

Senate in July 1912; scandal translated into the repudiation of his slate in the Republican primary. Thompson survived because he still was not a fultime politician. Rather, he was the wealthy sportsman who sometimes played at politics.³¹

Thompson had given up football, but not all sports. His new passion was sailing. He particularly enjoyed the Mackinac Race along the length of Lake Michigan; three times he won the competition. When ashore, he helped found the Illinois Athletic Association. He also served as commodore of the Associated Yacht and Power Boat Clubs.³²

These new interests only delayed Thompson's full entry into politics. Associates had been telling him for years to make a run for mayor. Frank Lowden suggested it in 1901, as did William Lorimer in 1905 and again in 1907. Fred Lundin fared better. Another product of the Lorimer organization, Lundin was a first-generation Swede of considerable peculiarity. Before entering politics he worked as an urban version of the traveling medicine man, selling the nonalcoholic Juniper Ade from a wagon. Lundin wore tinted glasses and a frock coat and referred to himself in the third person. The affectations did not prevent his election to the state senate or a term in Congress (1908–10). After Lorimer's fall in 1912, Lundin took over the remnants of the organization and used it to run a candidate for mayor. His choice was Thompson, who at age forty-five finally had decided to focus on politics over sports.³³

The Auditorium performance at Christmas in 1914 did not happen by chance. For most of the period 1915–17, Thompson operated as a generally orthodox politician. As a newcomer, he was unlikely to attract much interest if he reminded voters of his past. Nor could he appear overly ambitious. The nature of Illinois government and politics produced strong factions to ensure against any one politician trying too much too soon.

With fewer bodies of water or different boundaries, Illinois might have fashioned a community of the like-minded. As it was, sectionalism existed long before Thompson began his political career. Illinois was settled in the north by New Englanders who traveled overland and via the Great Lakes and in its lower half by Southerners who came by river. While the conflict never approached that in antebellum Virginia, the two sections—one dominated by Chicago and its economy, the other by small towns and agriculture—developed a lasting distrust of one another.

In the 1869 convention for a new state constitution, downstate delegates sought to base representation on a county rather than a population basis. Four years later, the *Illinois Weekly State Journal* considered Chicago state-hood so appealing that it urged, "Go, thou pestilent, discontented, brawling

disturber of the public place, and keep thine own vile sewer [the Chicago River, which carried the city's wastes into the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers] to thyself."³⁴

Downstate used various means of controlling the city. Among them was apportionment. The Illinois General Assembly was redistricted in 1901; the map so delighted rural and small-town interests that they avoided drawing another for over fifty years. The Chicago of 1930 (population 3.38 million) thus found itself with no greater political voice than the city of 1900 (1.7 million). When urban conditions warranted an extension of government, Springfield created public bodies with overlapping powers. "Chicago" could refer to city government, the board of education, three major and nineteen minor park districts, the tuberculosis sanitarium, the house of corrections, or the library board. In addition, Cook County provided medical and recreational facilities in the city while an independent sanitary district coped with the city and county sewage downstate found so offensive. Municipal services were said to be "in the city, but not of it." 35

The system duplicated services as it encouraged corruption. Yet rather than admit responsibility for those conditions, downstate usually blamed "the great Babylon by the lake." Decentralized government also rendered the city a political Babel; the factions seemed without end. Mr. Dooley's observation that the Democratic party was not on speaking terms with itself revealed only a half-truth in Chicago. Both parties were divided, by issues and ethnicity to say nothing of ambition.

All of these problems plagued Chicago Democrats, led by Roger Sullivan; both WASP reformers and New Immigrants found that the Irish leadership promised more than it shared. Political harmony also eluded Republicans, with many of the same groups (though somewhat more prosperous) finding it as difficult to work with one another.

Politics as factional dispute continued down to 1931, when the Depression labeled virtually all Republicans as offspring of Herbert Hoover. Only at that point (caused either by economic downturn or an act of providence) did Democrats start building a real machine. When the political scientist Carroll Hill Wooddy published an account of the 1926 Illinois primary, he included a "Dramatis Personae"; it listed twenty-two of the more prominent personalities and summarized more than two decades of Republican factional politics. Voters needed a program to identify the players.³⁶

Already active in 1915 were Republican factions led by Edward J. Brundage and Charles Deneen; each posed a threat to the newcomer Thompson. Brundage based his support on Chicago's North Side. Former mayor Fred Busse, a second-generation German, had built the organization. When

he died in 1914, Brundage took control. Busse had few ambitions beyond city hall; he looked every bit the ward healer and acquired the inevitable nickname Fat Fred. Brundage, however, was not so parochial. He worked for the favorite-son presidential bid of Senator Lawrence Y. Sherman in 1916 and served two terms (1916–24) as state attorney general. In 1915 Brundage wanted to show his organization was the equal of Deneen's, but he had no candidate to run. Lundin convinced him he had nothing to lose in supporting Thompson.³⁷

Thompson and Lundin also had to deal with Charles Deneen. To the Chicago lawyer and reformer Harold Ickes, Deneen was a leader as inspiring as a mud turtle. In party matters Brundage found him "a very unsatisfactory man to get away from an idea of his own." Whatever his limitations, Deneen endured. In a public career spanning thirty-four years, he served as state's attorney, governor, and U.S. senator.³⁸

Success lay in Deneen's ability to make himself the reasonable alternative. While state's attorney (1896–1904), he fashioned his own political identity by breaking with Lorimer. As governor (1904–12), he proved respectable without having to become an outright Progressive. He expanded the scope of state government and championed civil service and the direct primary, yet he refused to aid the 1911 mayoral candidacy of Charles E. Merriam, a dedicated social reformer. In the Senate (1924–30), Deneen somehow managed to both irritate Harold Ickes and gain his support. The senator treated the issue of the World Court "like a trained seal not knowing from what direction the fish will be thrown to him for his dinner." But Ickes also feared that Deneen's defeat in 1930 would deny reformers someone to "raise even a faltering standard" against a by-then entrenched Thompson.³⁹

Deneen was out of office in 1915, and reputation alone could not sustain a political organization. Control of city hall promised thousands of patronage jobs, something a respectable Republican from WASP, middle-class Englewood on the South Side was not supposed to covet. Deneen camouflaged his intentions by running Judge Harry Olson of the municipal court. The chief judge possessed Deneen-like respectability without the kind of independence that led to breaks with a political sponsor.⁴⁰

By tradition the Republican central committee slated the party's choices in primary elections. However, party discipline had broken down with Democrats in control as mayor and governor. Thompson exploited the stalemate with his new, more polished campaign style. Discarded—temporarily—was the tent orator. His place was taken by the candidate who charged that for too long the party organization had been "used and ma-

nipulated for the benefit of a few against the rank and file of our party." Thompson sounded progressive and looked every bit the appealing candidate. The picture for his campaign poster required over two hundred takes before the desired pose was struck. The result was a Thompson whom voters had not encountered before, both reasonable and athletic. Because the later campaigns differed so greatly, it was an image Chicagoans soon forgot ever existed.⁴¹

Deneen's candidate was a jurist forced to act like a politician. Harry Olson focused on efficiency and compounded the error with his model for good administration: "The packing industry sets an example to the people of Chicago for the management of their city government. Everyone is on the job. Business is done on honor. Pledges are kept." Readers of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* might have suggested a different example. The judge did little better in his appeal to women, who were voting in their first mayoral contest. Rather than capitalize on the historic moment the primary represented, he linked suffrage to the "forces for more efficient government" in the city. The *Tribune* noted a "certain sort of laboratory exactness and chill efficiency" that made Olson a weak candidate.⁴²

Olson became the first opponent to experience Thompson's cant of inconsistencies. Thompson had no intention of ceding him the crucial middle-class vote. So he attacked Olson's reform reputation by charging Olson shared patronage with Municipal Court bailiff Anton J. Cermak. Voters were encouraged to link the Bohemian-born, Democrat Cermak with the supposedly respectable judge. Along the way they could forget about Thompson and Lorimer.⁴³

Thompson also made sure to display his civic vision: "It is the Chicago spirit, the 'I Will' spirit which has created the achievements and carved the destiny of Chicago." With a Chicago ancestry of three generations on his mother's side, "It is the spirit I represent and which has been born and bred in me." Although Olson underwhelmed voters with talk of a city budget bureau, the *Chicago Journal* captured a far more attractive challenger—Commodore Thompson, photographed at the helm of a yacht, captain's hat set firmly on his head, necktie blowing in a lake breeze.⁴⁴

That image helped carry Thompson to a 2,500-vote victory. "Colored voters down in the Second Ward swung the decision in favor of William Hale Thompson," the *Daily News* reported, but the 7,300-vote margin there was misleading. Thompson would not have attracted that kind of support on his own. He was as yet too much an unknown, for black and white voters alike. His black support came from the ward organization headed by two ex-Lorimerites. George F. Harding and Martin B. Madden

were both astute politicians. They long had recognized the importance of black voters and in 1915 successfully ran a black candidate (Oscar De-Priest) in the aldermanic primary. The Second Ward vote was their victory first and Thompson's only by extension. And in a simple two-way race, the vote of black Chicagoans would not even have mattered. However, the ghost of Roosevelt battling for the Lord refused to slip quietly into the past. The primary was decided when the rump of Chicago's Progressive movement refused to support Olson. Alderman Jacob A. Hey entered the Republican contest while Congressman Charles M. Thomson said he would run as an independent. Hey ignored the advice of Jane Addams and Harold Ickes to withdraw; Hey instead dismissed Ickes as a "registered voter of Evanston" who took \$20,000 from Democrats in 1914 to fund the senate candidacy of Progressive Raymond Robins. Ickes sued for slander, Hey polled 4,300 votes, and Thompson won the nomination. 45

As entertainment, the Democratic primary between Mayor Carter Harrison II and County Clerk Robert M. Sweitzer offered passable theater, in both the traditional and the modern sense. One generation removed from Kentucky, Harrison sported the white hair and mustache of a stereotypical Southern colonel. Sweitzer compared him at different times to an aristocrat and Pooh-Bah in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, driven "to gratify his family pride." Sweitzer was referring to the Harrison family's hold on city hall. Harrison's father, Carter I, was in his fifth term when a frustrated job seeker assassinated him in 1893. Harrison II first won the mayoralty four years later with a campaign aimed in part at middle-class cycling enthusiasts; he cast himself as "Not the Champion Cyclist but the Cyclists' Champion." Now seeking a sixth term, Harrison tried to update his appeal with a campaign film played at movie houses. This time the electorate was not impressed. Sweitzer, a political Falstaff sans beard, won by 79,000 votes. 46

Sweitzer, however, did not command strong support. Party reformers mostly identified with Harrison, who had made a career out of his opposition to traction magnate Charles Tyson Yerkes at the turn of the century. To them Sweitzer was a product of the regular organization controlled by Roger Sullivan. Sweitzer had the further political misfortune of being a Sullivan relative by marriage. Working-class and ethnic voters were lukewarm for a different reason: The Democrats had not yet mastered coalition politics.

Chicago ethnic groups were a hard sell politically. A ticket that pleased one group was certain to displease another; a ticket dominated by the Irish, in particular, was likely to alienate most everyone else. This antagonism

was the product of conditions in Europe. People who had fled emperor or czar did not care to hear about the Curse of Cromwell. Nor could the Irish easily explain, let alone understand, centuries of persecution.

The Great Famine forced an Irish exodus to yet another place dominated by hostile Protestants. But there was one important difference between the old home and the new. Unlike Ireland, the United States did not deny the poor access to at least some power. Politics thus became a way to redress history. The problem for Democrats was that there were too many groups with too much history.⁴⁷

And secular frictions only worsened come Sunday. Chicago was home to numerous immigrant Catholics, many of whom resented the leadership of an Irish church hierarchy. German and Polish Catholics were particularly resistant to any suggestion of assimilation. One German parish school insisted on teaching the old language to a student body that had become largely Irish, Italian, Lebanese, and African American. For Polish Catholics, the issue was not simply language but liberation. The Reverend Stanislaus Radziejewski explained that "if a majority of Poles should become Germanized, Russianized or Americanized, then God, even if He should desire it, would not know for whom or from what to restore Poland." In the face of such hostility, the Universal Church gave way to parishes organized by nationality. This arrangement meant that in 1916 Bohemians, Germans, Italians, Lithuanians, Poles, and Slovaks had no less than a 82 percent chance of hearing a sermon in their own language. Compatriot preaching to compatriots on Sunday did little to encourage voting for anyone else come Tuesday.48

Carter Harrison exploited these various tensions throughout the primary. "If I were the professed German candidate in the election," he told listeners, "I would at least be able to make a speech in German." It was no idle boast; educated for three years in Germany, Harrison often campaigned in the language. As an in-law of Sullivan, the ostensibly German Sweitzer was said to have relatives with the last names Higgins, Murphy, and Sullivan.⁴⁹

The baiting assumed a different form on the West Side. Jewish audiences there heard that Sweitzer derided city hall as a synagogue and had promised to fire all Jewish city workers if elected. The anti-Semitism was imagined, but the problems for Roger Sullivan and his candidate were real enough. In 1915 at least, a stable, urban Democratic majority still lay in the future.⁵⁰

Sweitzer hoped victory would be the product of sheer numbers: Democrats had outvoted Republicans in the primary by roughly a 3-1 margin.

Thompson polled fewer votes (87,000) in victory than Harrison had in defeat (104,000). Democratic leaders assumed they would lose few crossover votes to Thompson in the general election. Good Democrats did not vote for commodores (as the *Journal* pegged Thompson), or so party figures assumed.⁵¹

Thompson understood his situation better than Roger Sullivan imagined. He had to attract as many middle-class Republicans and disaffected Democrats as possible. His first break came when the various Republican factions pledged a united front for the general election. Deneen and Brundage were given places on the campaign managing committee; Charles Merriam, meanwhile, decided not to run as an independent. Only Harry Olson balked at the idea of closing ranks. During the primary Olson had been subjected to a whispering campaign, that he was Protestant or a Mason or had a Catholic wife; the rumors changed with the neighborhood. Probably under pressure from Deneen, the judge eventually gave his endorsement.⁵²

Thompson sounded pleased, even Rooseveltian, over the prospect of party unity: "In securing harmony every element is entitled to a square deal and a square deal they shall have from me." Unity included the prodigal Progressive faction, whose candidates for treasurer and city clerk had won in the Republican primary. Thompson did not mind that victory required fusion. Like his partners, he realized cooperation was the price all factions paid for the chance at power.⁵³

The campaign was marked by a never-to-be-repeated reasonableness. Commodore Thompson told women, "I regard the public school as nearer the home than any other institution." And the mothers of Chicago were promised they would have "greater representation than they have ever had before." Thompson also praised the work of Charles H. Wacker together with the Chicago Plan Commission and proposed his own plan of Chicago, an underground equivalent complete with subway and utility conduits.⁵⁴

Again, there was no hint of old tent performances or the demagogy to come. Thompson was the self-assured candidate who called Sweitzer "a good fellow" and Roger Sullivan "a likeable man." The confidence carried through to the end of the campaign. Harry Olson saw the Stock Yards as a metaphor for city government; Thompson understood their greater value as a campaign setting. They allowed him to arrive for a rally on horseback after he rode a mile along Forty-third Street. And with less than a week to the election, Thompson remembered to bring along his Stetson. 55

Sweitzer was not so lucky. He failed in his efforts to link Thompson with

Lorimer because the latter's fall had been so complete there was no Blond Boss left to fear. Roger Sullivan, however, was an unavoidable issue. In the 1890s Sullivan helped plan a scheme to force People's Gas Light and Coke Company to pay \$7.3 million for Ogden Gas; it was a dummy firm that had been granted a lucrative franchise from the city council. Sullivan eventually abandoned graft for leadership of the Democratic organization, but the tag of unrepentant boodler stuck. Opponents linked Sullivan candidates to Ogden Gas almost out of habit. This time, though, Thompson added a twist: He promised to have the utilities critic Charles Merriam lead city efforts to recover \$6 million in overcharges from People's Gas. The idea seemed the work of a reformer, not the party regular everyone assumed Thompson to be. 56

Throughout the primary and general election, Sweitzer promised efficiency and spoke on women's issues. "I believe that men and women should receive the same compensation for the same work," he told a delegation of Democratic women. "Efficiency should count, not sex." The appeal was aimed at the nearly 33,000 women who had voted against Thompson in the primary. But Sweitzer could not maintain his reform image as the amiable Democrat soon overwhelmed the efficient. When Sweitzer announced his candidacy, 250 relatives promised him a victory present of a new chair for the mayor's office. The thought of a politician with that many relations was unlikely to please the advocates of civil service.⁵⁷

Sweitzer again hurt himself at a Sunday rally on the West Side. "I'm for personal liberty in its broadest possible sense," he announced to a saloon audience. "My opponents say I'm going to close the saloons on Sunday. I want to say that I never was a Sunday school teacher in my life, and I'm not going to be one." The comment played poorly in areas such as Austin and Englewood, middle-class neighborhoods where temperance sentiment ran high. Sweitzer no less than Thompson needed the vote of middle-class WASPs and reformers. Instead, he got the divisive rhetoric of ally Barney Grogan, who advised, "Boys, I don't take no stock in long-haired men nor no more in short-haired women." ⁵⁸

Sweitzer routinely criticized Thompson for making often-contradictory promises to different voting blocs: "Just before the primaries it was 'church, home and civil service' when Mr. Thompson spoke at Hyde Park or Lake View, while down in the First and Second Wards it was 'I am for prize fights and dice games for you colored boys.' What will the issue be next week?" Thompson reportedly had told black voters he would not have the police raid "a little friendly crap game." If Thompson offered his antitheticals, so did Sweitzer. The city had too many divergent groups for a politician

to do otherwise. In 1915 mayoral politics, success went to the candidate who made the most promises and suffered the smallest backlash. Sweitzer tried as he appealed to women and the saloon vote, only he lacked Thompson's talent for attracting opposites.⁵⁹

Sweitzer's problems continued throughout the campaign. Despite an endorsement by Teamsters, Sweitzer could not stop the rumor that he scabbed during the rancorous Teamsters' strike of 1905. Even a chance meeting with Samuel Gompers in a Chicago restaurant worked against him. Gompers told reporters he was not endorsing anyone in the election, then admitted he liked Sweitzer and thought he would be a good mayor. It was a comment to attract the attention of voters hostile to organized labor. 60

A second, more serious, rumor carried over from the primary. Sweitzer's father was German and his mother Irish; until 1915, he stressed the latter to the point of being a leader in the Ancient Order of Hibernians. When German voters began wearing buttons with the inscription "Unser Wilhelm für Bürgermeister," Democrats realized their problem. They attempted to win back German support with a new campaign flier. "Dear Friend," it began, "GERMAN and AUSTRIAN-AMERICAN citizens (men and women) have a duty to perform in Chicago on next Tuesday, April 6, a duty which is of the utmost importance to every person of German and Austrian birth or descent, in every part of the world." After a defense of Central Powers' foreign policy, the letter predicted a Sweitzer victory would "be a wonderful encouragement to the friends of the German cause and the most effective rebuke to anti-German agitation throughout the country." Republicans countered by recirculating the flier in Bohemian and Polish neighborhoods, where sentiment ran against "the preservation of our dear Fatherland." The Sullivan organization lacked sufficient standing in either community to perform the necessary damage control. Where he had one problem before the letter, Sweitzer suddenly found himself with two.61

Sweitzer headed a party that was divided as well as error-prone. Harrison allies Governor Edward F. Dunne and Senator J. Hamilton Lewis largely avoided Sweitzer after the primary. Harrison himself refused to aid the campaign. In desperation, Sweitzer tried to generate support among the rank and file in city hall with a letter promising "to help all [city] employees to a higher place in public esteem and to better opportunities" if elected. The message succeeded only in raising more doubts about Sweitzer's commitment to civil service. Carter Harrison also stood aside when his personal secretary, Charles C. Fitzmorris, defected to Thompson. As an official of the Democrats' central committee, Fitzmorris possessed the

Democratic voting lists, which he took with him. By switching to Thompson, Fitzmorris exorcised the Democrats' "ghost vote"; the registration lists allowed Republicans to challenge suspected vote fraud.⁶²

With his campaign foundering, Sweitzer failed to exploit those few openings that appeared. Following the primary, Thompson was reported on vacation at a Michigan health resort. The "resort" turned out to be the home of political associate James Pugh; Thompson was recovering from depression and nervous exhaustion before the general campaign began in early March. Sweitzer either refused to make an issue of the situation or, more likely, he was unaware of it.⁶³

Emotional problems may have been endemic to that generation of politicians and civic leaders. Sweitzer appeared to be in the healthy minority. Republicans Edward Brundage and Medill McCormick eventually committed suicide; Frank Lowden suffered from eczema so chronic that he left Congress; early Thompson ally Senator Lawrence Sherman retired from the Senate because of a mysterious eye disorder; and Victor Lawson suffered a nervous breakdown complete with insomnia and fear of being left alone. If Sweitzer knew about Thompson, the adage about things going and coming around probably encouraged his silence. In any event, inquiring minds did not yet want to know about a candidate's mental health.⁶⁴

Less than a week before the election, Republicans staged a rally at St. Adalbert's parish on the near West Side. They treated the subject of race in a distinctly un-Thompson-like manner. Campaign speaker John Kantor made an incendiary allegation: As county clerk, Sweitzer had granted the marriage license to black heavyweight fighter Jack Johnson and his white fiancée. Despite a plea from the woman's mother, Kantor said Sweitzer "permitted the black man to marry the white woman and [so] tore to pieces the heart of that little mother." Thompson dropped the charge in his 1919 rematch against Sweitzer; repeating it would have cost him the election. But 1915 was different—the Great Migration had not yet produced a large voting bloc ready to hail the Second Lincoln. Until then Thompson could afford to indulge in some political race-baiting. And Sweitzer could criticize only at the risk of appearing sympathetic to African Americans. He let the incident pass without comment. 65

The two campaigns staged downtown rallies the Saturday before the election. At one point, Democrats challenged Republicans with taunts of "Go on, you A.P.A.'s." Thompson should have been flattered to have his campaign compared to the restrictionist American Protective Association of the 1890s. After all, he was not dependent on the immigrant vote. His interests lay elsewhere, as ward vote totals showed.⁶⁶

By class and ethnicity, Democrats held the advantage in the election, and Sweitzer should not have lost by 147,000 votes. However, "natural" Democrats did not yet see themselves that way. In 1915 they were mostly immigrants and their children, as likely as not to be unregistered or too young to vote.

The Sixteenth Ward included Polish Downtown, an area housing reformer Edith Abbott described: "Along one street after another there are rows of tall and narrow brick tenements, usually three stories high, built on 25-foot lots." The Sixteenth Ward and its tenements were home to 67,000 people, yet it was hardly a vote factory. The ward went to Sweitzer by 2,000 votes out of 10,000 cast. Sweitzer also took the Nineteenth Ward, the Italian equivalent of the Sixteenth, just as crowded and underregistered. Of the ward's 59,000 residents, 9,000 voted, with Sweitzer winning by 1,000.67

The Seventh Ward of Alderman Charles Merriam and South Side, WASP respectability went to Thompson. Its voters were largely middle-class WASPs. The Seventh had a population slightly over 70,000. On election day some 29,000 people cast their ballots, and Thompson came away the victor by 11,000. Citywide, Sweitzer carried 10 wards by 16,000 votes. Together, the middle-class Seventh and Thirty-Third Wards, both of which favored Olson in the primary, went to Thompson by 23,000 votes over Sweitzer. And there were 23 other wards in the Thompson column.⁶⁸

Women's voting showed how poorly Sweitzer juggled the issues of efficiency, equal pay, and open saloons. Only 26,000 women backed Thompson in the Republican primary; six weeks later, they gave him a 149,000-to-90,000 advantage. Thompson also won the majority of African American, Bohemian, German, Jewish, and Swedish voters. And Democrats were too weak to keep him from taking 41 percent of the Italian and 45 percent of the Polish vote. In addition Thompson carried the three wards Carter Harrison won in the primary.⁶⁹

Thompson was a politician who resembled the Supreme Court in at least one respect—he could read election returns. In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt carried Chicago by a 36,000-vote plurality over Eugene Debs, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. So Thompson made his Roosevelt allusions, as when he complimented the *Tribune* for its "great, bully" coverage of his inauguration; such talk paid off nicely in votes. All sixteen of the wards won by Roosevelt went to Thompson three years later. It was another "bully" victory, although Thompson may not have realized that the voters in these wards expected him to do more than merely sound like Roosevelt.⁷⁰

Robert Sweitzer's consolation came long after the election, when others

repeated his critique of the winner: Thompson was the politician of multiple images or inconsistencies, of civil service and vice. That observation, without the qualifier that Sweitzer had tried the same, appeared in works published during the 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s.⁷¹

Notes

- 1. Chicago Evening Journal, Dec. 23, 1914; Chicago Daily News, Dec. 23, 1914.
- 2. Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 15; William H. Stuart, *The Twenty Incredible Years* (Chicago: M. A. Donahue, 1935), 7.
 - 3. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 15-17, 26.
 - 4. Ibid., 18-19.
- 5. Ibid., 20-25; William Henry Harbaugh, The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 55-57.
 - 6. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 25-27.
 - 7. Ibid., 26; Harbaugh, Roosevelt, 57.
- 8. On Big Bill Day, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1916, and Aug. 23, 1927; Thomas Kessner, *Fiorello La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 118.
 - 9. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 29-31.
- 10. For Chicago Tribune report, see ibid., 31; for the significance of sports, see Gunther Barth, City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), chap. 5.
- 11. For the beginning of his political career, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 33, 37; for the Everleigh sisters, see Herbert Asbury, Gem of the Prairie: An Informal History of the Chicago Underworld (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940; reprint, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 249, 259.
- 12. For his election background, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 38–42; Municipal Citizenship Committee of the Woman's City Club and the Civil Service Reform Society of Chicago, Municipal Voters' League platform, endorsed by William Hale Thompson (1900), Prints and Photographs (Graphics), Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS).
- 13. Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 38–45. Thompson voted for the measure in the belief that it solved his ward's vice problem. That both Coughlin and Kenna could work on the freshman Republican in the council chambers was due to the structure of Chicago government. At the time of Thompson's election, Chicago was divided into thirty-five wards; each ward sent two aldermen, elected in alternating years, to the council for two-year terms. In 1920 Chicago was redivided into fifty wards, with one alderman for each ward.

Time has rehabilitated Coughlin and Kenna far more than it has Thompson. Coughlin is remembered for the color selection of his wardrobe and his attempts at poetry, Kenna for his political acumen. Indeed, organized crime may have been less violent and politics more colorful then than they are today. That admitted, Coughlin and Kenna showed the profit in vice, corrupted the governmental process, and helped destroy lives.

- 14. For Curley's family life, see Jack Beatty, *The Rascal King: The Life and Times of James Michael Curley*, 1874–1958 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1992).
- 15. For the playground background, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 42; Thompson quoted in Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 50.
- 16. Population figures from Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto*, 1890–1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 12, 14–15. The city's black population grew from 44,103 in 1910 to 109,458 in 1920, much to the benefit of Thompson's 1919 mayoral campaign.
 - 17. Chicago Daily News quoted in Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 45.
- 18. Chicago Tribune quoted in Joel Arthur Tarr, A Study in Boss Politics: William Lorimer of Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 92.
 - 19. For Lorimer's career, see esp. chaps. 2, 4, and 7.
 - 20. Tarr, Lorimer, 5-10, 23, 38-42.
- 21. Ibid., 13–14; population figure from John M. Allswang, A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890–1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), table 2:2, 18; for Lorimer and blacks, see Gosnell, Negro Politicians, 39n.
- 22. Tarr, Lorimer, 44, 55, 74–75, 128. Lorimer's business interests included cartage, bricks, and banks, activities that received contracts from friendly public officials. Middle-class Chicago's weakness for tax fixes is discussed at length in Herbert D. Simpson, *The Tax Situation in Illinois* (Chicago: Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities, 1929), and Herbert D. Simpson, *Tax Racket and Tax Reform in Chicago* (Chicago: Institute for Economic Research, 1930).
- 23. For Lorimer's tent shows, see Tarr, Lorimer, 61, and Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 49–50; the Percy remark is attributed to Robert Lyman in George C. Hoffmann, "Big Bill Thompson: His Mayoral Campaigns and Voting Strength" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1956), 35.
- 24. For his early Anglophobia, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 50-51; Kipling quoted in Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 192.
- 25. Lorimer quoted in Tarr, Lorimer, 191. After the Tribune ran an ad boasting the third-largest daily Sunday circulation in the country, Daily News publisher Victor Lawson used a blue pencil to write "not true" across his copy. When the Tribune claimed a Sunday edition had achieved the largest-ever circulation in Chicago, Lawson wrote to pass along other, arguably more accurate, figures. Tribune ad, Nov. 24, 1915, in Tribune-Daily News correspondence, Victor Lawson Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago; copy of letter from Lawson to William Field, Feb. 1, 1916, regular correspondence, Lawson Papers.

- 26. For the arsenic suggestion, see Tarr, Lorimer, 26; Chicago Tribune editorial, Apr. 30, 1890, quoted in John M. Beck, "Chicago Newspapers and the Public Schools, 1890–1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1953), 54; Chicago Tribune, July 8, 1917, July 10, 1917, July 12, 1917. Across from its July 12 story on black unemployment and possible no-cost return trips to the South, the Tribune ran a Briggs cartoon in which a black waiter said, "Yeh-Yeh, Yaw-w-w Hyah Hyuh Yuh-Yuh-Yassuh-Yassuh-Yass Indeed Yuh Yuh Yuh Yeh Yuh." By 1986–87, the paper had come full circle with a television ad campaign featuring a Chicago blues singer.
- 27. Charles H. Dennis, Victor Lawson: His Time and His Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 68.
- 28. For turkeys, see Dennis, Lawson, 393–94; for labor relations, see Royal J. Schmidt, "The Chicago Daily News and Illinois Politics, 1876–1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1957), 159–61; for Lawson's conception of good government, see Dennis, Lawson, 75, 80, 211; for the Chicago Tribune and production unions, see Gwen Morgan and Arthur Veysey, Poor Little Rich Boy (and How He Made Good) (Carpentersville, Ill.: Crossroads Communications, 1985), 446.
- 29. For leases and background, see Beck, "Chicago Newspapers," 138, 140–46, and George S. Counts, School and Society in Chicago (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1928; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 58–59. When a reform school board including Jane Addams brought suit against one of the leases, the Tribune complained the action was taken by a group of "freaks, monomaniacs and boodlers." Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 132.
- 30. For the tax incident, see Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 13, and Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 76.
 - 31. For the scandal, see Tarr, Lorimer, chaps. 10 and 11.
 - 32. For clubs and yachting, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 67, 71-72.
- 33. For early mayoral encouragement, see William T. Hutchinson, Lowden of Illinois: The Life of Frank O. Lowden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 1:104, and Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 67, 69; for Lundin, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 82–85.
- 34. Chicago Journal quoted in William Booth Philip, "Chicago and the Down State: A Study of Their Conflicts, 1870–1934" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1940), 259; for background, see 1, 19–24.
- 35. For Illinois's rotten boroughs, see Robert P. Howard, *Illinois: A History of the Prairie State* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 554–57; for decentralized government, see Charles E. Merriam, Spencer D. Parratt, and Albert Lepawsky, *The Government of the Metropolitan Region of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 19–24 (quote on 21).
- 36. Merriam, Parratt, and Lepawsky, Government, 183; Carroll Hill Wooddy, The Chicago Primary of 1926: A Study in Election Methods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 3–4, 286–87. Paul

- M. Green offers a vigorous analysis of Chicago politics that differs considerably from mine. For Green, the system is best understood through its dominant personalities, especially Democrats Roger Sullivan, George Brennan, Anton Cermak, and Richard J. Daley. See "The Chicago Democratic Party, 1840–1920: From Factionalism to Political Organization" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1975), and "Irish Chicago: The Multi-Ethnic Road to Machine Success," in *Ethnic Chicago*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, revised and expanded (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984).
- 37. For factions, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 86; correspondence between Brundage and Lawrence Y. Sherman, July 1915–Apr. 1916, Lawrence Y. Sherman Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield.

Brundage also helped raise his brother's son Avery. The youngster's interest in amateur athletics may have been shaped by his uncle's intervention for Mayor Fred Busse with ticket scalpers during the 1908 World Series and by the stories, already common, linking Chicago ballplayers with organized crime. Allen Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 1–11.

- 38. For the turtle comment, see copy of Ickes to Hiram Johnson, Mar. 28, 1930, general correspondence, Harold L. Ickes Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Brundage to Lawrence Sherman, Dec. 2, 1915, Sherman Papers.
- 39. For the seal remark, see copy of Ickes to Hiram Johnson, Jan. 21, 1930, general correspondence, Ickes Papers; for Deneen's background, see Tarr, *Lorimer*, 115, 180–81; for the defeat, see copy of Ickes to Harriet Vittum, Apr. 3, 1930, general correspondence, Ickes Papers. Deneen, possibly fearing for his reputation at the hands of historians, had his papers destroyed.
 - 40. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 56, 94-96.
- 41. For committee maneuvering, see *Chicago Journal*, Jan. 8, 1915, Jan. 9, 1915, Jan. 18, 1915; for the campaign poster, see John Bright, *Hizzoner Big Bill Thompson: An Idyll of Chicago* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1930), 40–41. Democratic and Republican central committees included representatives from each of the city's wards.
- 42. For Olson on the role of women and on the Stock Yards, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 5, 1915, Feb. 14, 1915; for the editorial assessment, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 25, 1915.
 - 43. Chicago Journal, Feb. 4, 1915.
- 44. For "spirit," see *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 15, 1915; for the photograph of "Commodore" Thompson, see *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 19, 1915. The *Journal* provided Thompson with his major newspaper support.
- 45. Chicago Daily News, Feb. 24, 1915; vote totals rounded off to the nearest hundred from The Chicago Daily News Almanac and Year-Book for 1916, 561. Among others stressing the 1915 black vote in the primary and general election are Bright, Hizzoner, 59; Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 95-96; and Allswang, House,

146. For Madden and other white South Side Republicans, see Gosnell, Negro Politicians, chaps. 3, 9, and 14; Charles Branham, "The Transformation of Black Political Leadership in Chicago, 1864–1942" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981), 84–86, 148–57; Thomas Robert Bullard, "From Businessman to Congressman: The Career of Martin B. Madden" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1973), chaps. 9 and 10; and Spear, Black Chicago, 121–24.

46. For Harrison as an aristocrat, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 11, 1915; for city mottoes, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 14, 1915; for Pooh-Bah, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 17, 1915; for film, see Chicago Tribune, Jan. 28, 1915, Jan. 29, 1915; for cycling story, see Carter H. Harrison, Stormy Years: The Autobiography of Carter H. Harrison, Five Times Mayor of Chicago (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1935), 104–6. Harrison also helped pioneer the now-common practice of the telephone canvass. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1916, 561.

47. Steven P. Erie notes the reluctance of Irish Democrats to share power and patronage in Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), esp. chap. 1. Erie also contends that Thompson forced Chicago's Irish Democrats to reach out for New Immigrant votes they might otherwise have ignored (12).

48. For ethnic attitudes, see Charles Shanabruch, Chicago's Catholics: The Evolution of an American Identity (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 43–53 (quote on 45–46); for nationality parishes and ethnic breakdowns, see Edward R. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole: Cardinal Mundelein and Chicago Catholicism (Nortre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 65–72. The breakdown for percentages of ethnic priests serving their own ethnic groups is Bohemian (82), German (90), Italian (86), Lithuanian (92), Polish (100), and Slovakian (100). In addition, 99 percent of Irish priests were assigned to parishes that were largely Irish.

49. For Harrison's German remark, see *Chicago Journal*, Jan. 22, 1915, and Harrison, *Stormy Years*, 31-32; for Sweitzer as Irish, see *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 1, 1915.

50. For the anti-Semitic charge, see Edward Herbert Mazur, "Minyan for a Prairie City: The Politics of Chicago Jewry, 1850–1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1974), 235. Sweitzer managed 53 percent of the Jewish vote in the primary but only 32 percent against Thompson's 60 in the general election (237, 242).

51. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1916, 560-61.

52. For the whispering campaign, see Chicago Journal, Feb. 24, 1915.

53. For harmony, see Chicago Journal, Mar. 3, 1915, Mar. 12, 1915, and Mar. 31, 1915; for Progressives, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 2, 1915.

54. For Thompson and women, see Chicago Journal, Mar. 3, 1915; for business leaders, see Chicago Journal, Mar. 25, 1915.

- 55. For self-assurance, see Chicago Journal, Mar. 9, 1915; for Stock Yards, see Chicago Journal, Apr. 2, 1915.
- 56. For the Ogden Gas story, see Harrison, Stormy Years, 192–203; for Merriam's promise, see Chicago Journal, Mar. 18, 1915; for Thompson as a political tool of Samuel Insull, see Forrest McDonald, Insull (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 178–81, 253–57. McDonald borrowed a technique from Thompson's contemporaries by reducing Big Bill's stature for effect. For the Chicago papers, Thompson played Trilby to Fred Lundin's Svengali; McDonald elevated Insull to the latter role. If Thompson was acting merely as directed, Insull misjudged what was needed to control Merriam.
- 57. For Sweitzer relations, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 1, 1915; for the efficiency promise, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1915; women's vote figure rounded off to the nearest hundred from *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 24, 1915.
- 58. For the saloon speech, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 22, 1915; for Grogan's remark, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 5, 1915.
- 59. For Sweitzer's charge, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 13, 1915; for craps, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 103-4.
- 60. For the scab rumor, see Chicago Journal, Mar. 26, 1915; for the Gompers meeting, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 25, 1915.
- 61. For Sweitzer's ethnicity, see Green, "Chicago Democratic Party," 243n; for the button appearance, see *Chicago Journal*, Mar. 20, 1915; copy of Dear Fatherland Letter (1915), Prints and Photographs Collection (Graphics), CHS; for anti-Thompson leaflets, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 2, 1915, Apr. 6, 1915.
- 62. For Sweitzer's problems, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 105–6; for Sweitzer's letter, see *Chicago Journal*, Mar. 27, 1915. Harrison phoned Thompson the night of the election. See Thompson to Harrison, May 6, 1915, Carter Harrison IV Papers, Newberry Library. The younger Harrison was more commonly identified by "II" as the second Harrison to occupy the mayor's office. Thompson also invited his predecessor for a visit to city hall.
 - 63. Chicago Journal, Mar. 1, 1915; Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 96-98.
- 64. For Brundage, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 348; for McCormick, see Morgan and Veysey, Poor Little Rich Boy, 262–64; for Lowden, see Hutchinson, Lowden, 1:190; for Sherman, see correspondence, 1919–20, Sherman Papers; for Lawson, see Schmidt, "Chicago Daily News," 39.
- 65. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 29, 1915. Kantor was a disaffected Harrison Democrat who also told Jewish audiences that Sweitzer was anti-Semitic. Bright, Hizzoner, 60.
 - 66. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 4, 1915.
- 67. Edith Abbott quoted in Edward R. Kantowicz, *Polish-American Politics in Chicago*, 1888–1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 15–16. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1916, 567. In percentages, the ward adult population, adults voting, adults regis-

tered, and registered adults voting in the Sixteenth Ward were 48, 33, 36, and 90, respectively. For the Nineteenth, 48, 32, 37, and 86. Population figures rounded off to the nearest thousand from 1914 school census data in *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1916, 585-88.

- 68. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1916, 567. In percentages, the ward adult population, adults voting, adults registered, and registered adults voting in the Seventh Ward were 70, 58, 66, and 88, respectively. Population figures rounded off to the nearest thousand from 1914 school census data in 1916 Almanac, 585–88. The statistics reinforce the argument of Kristi Andersen that the New Deal coalition was more the result of new-voter mobilization than political conversion. *The Creation of a Democratic Majority*, 1928–1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
- 69. Women's voting figures rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 24, 1915 (primary), and *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1916 (general election), 567; group figures from Allswang, *House*, table 3:1, 42.
 - 70. Vote and ward totals for 1912 from Chicago Tribune, Nov. 7, 1912.
- 71. Sweitzer's charge, unqualified, is repeated in Bright, *Hizzoner*, 59; Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 103-4; and Allswang, *House*, 146.

2

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Dennis P. Gorman told [Patrick] Lonigan quickly, but with his customary aloofness and dignity, that every contribution, no matter how small, would be appreciated, and that Wilson was not the President of Wall Street, but of the common people, and the common people were the ones he needed. And the Democratic Party, Gorman called it our party, is the voice of the common people, the average, good, honest Americans like those of St. Patrick's parish.

-James T. Farrell, Young Lonigan

THOMPSON SENT a thank-you note to the *Tribune* soon after the election. The paper had withheld an endorsement while assuring readers that regardless of the outcome, "we are not headed for the bow-wows." Like the race-baiting incident at St. Adalbert's, the letter was part of a political image Thompson would later discard. "To the editors of the Tribune," it read, "I desire to thank you for the fair manner in which you gave me an opportunity through the columns of your paper to present my candidacy and the principles for which I stood." Thompson also arranged a peace meeting with the *Daily News*'s Victor Lawson, who promised to praise any work well done.¹

The mayor-elect then moved on to other business. He relied on two political tools—one old, the other new—to elevate his inauguration above the ordinary. The first consisted of parades, which had long fascinated Chicagoans. A march could turn violent, as the Lager Beer Riots did in 1856, or assume a more civic nature. (Rather than a parade to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chicago Fire, Mr. Dooley suggested one honoring cholera or the traction baron Charles Tyson Yerkes.) Thompson clearly preferred a civic purpose in the form of a Prosperity Day Parade.

On a Monday in late April, some quarter of a million spectators lined the streets of downtown. There were floats and banners (Cubist-styled for the Art Institute), but most of all there were automobiles. Thompson already understood their value in campaigning and self-promotion. During the Lorimer election scandal, he had planned a two-hundred-car parade to buoy the spirits of the Blonde Boss. In a city where horse-drawn vehicles outnumbered autos, one internal-combustion machine impressed, and as part of a parade, 1,700 were likely to overwhelm. The cars helped produce the desired emotional and political effect. At one point the crowd began chanting "Thompson-Prosperity, Prosperity-Thompson."²

Thompson used his inaugural speech to outline Chicago's approaching greatness. He predicted the city would draw "a cosmopolitan citizenship" intent on equal opportunity, wealth, justice, and the chance to "rear their children in the atmosphere of liberty." With equal modesty, Thompson pledged good rule and good government, and as promised he included Charles Merriam on a special aldermanic committee to fight gas rates. For the estimated 150,000 jobless people, Thompson offered public works.³

Of course, not all Chicagoans considered unemployment a problem. There were some like Samuel Insull, president of the Commonwealth Edison Company, who once boasted, "My experience is that the greatest aid to efficiency of labor is a long line of men waiting at the gate." The sentiment was common in corporate offices throughout the city. Business leaders were drawn to Thompson by his list of intended public works—waterfront development, a combined-line or union station for railroads, the widening of Twelfth Street, and the extension of Michigan Boulevard. He spoke their language, or at least that part comprised of the Chicago Plan.⁴

The business of Chicago was industry. That reality embarrassed the local elite nearly as much as it enriched them. The 1893 Columbian Exposition was supposed to erase the city's image of porkopolis, but it soon returned. "Pork, not Plato, has made Chicago," wrote the critic Price Collier in 1897, "and Chicago people have not arrived at a stage of civilization yet where they can with propriety or advantage change their allegiance." 5

The architect Daniel Burnham believed otherwise. Popular in the business community for his conservative and serviceable designs, Burnham understood the civic schizophrenia of the wealthy. "You all know that there is a tendency among our well-to-do people to spend much time and money elsewhere and that this tendency has been rapidly growing in late years," he wrote in "The Commercial Value of Beauty." "We have been running away to Cairo, Athens, the Riviera, Paris and Vienna because life at home

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is not so pleasant as in these fashionable centers." How much money, Burnham wondered, was generated in Chicago but spent elsewhere.6

Burnham's solution was to bring Paris and Vienna to the shores of Lake Michigan. Gone would be the streets choked with traffic and the hodgepodge of buildings with clashing styles and sizes. In their place would rise a Beaux Arts Chicago, linked by boulevards and a unifying architectural design. In addition Burnham promised a city efficient as well as beautiful. His 1909 Plan of Chicago "frankly takes into consideration the fact that the American city, and Chicago pre-eminently, is a center of industry and traffic." Toward that end, Burnham proposed a regional transportation system and a series of street, bridge, and overpass projects for the city.⁷

With the Plan came a commission, under the leadership of Charles Wacker. A prominent brewer, Wacker realized Chicagoans had to be convinced they could not live without planning. The commission staged stereopticon lectures and produced a motion picture; related articles appeared in hundreds of magazines; and the retailer Marshall Field reached over 67,000 out-of-town merchants with Plan stories running in the retailer's publications. So that no one ignored the Plan's value, Chicago religious leaders devoted a sermon to it on a specially designated Nehemiah Day. Literature was distributed to cities on five continents. Only those living in Africa or visiting Antarctica were denied word of the Plan.8

There were also textbooks. At the urging of the Plan Commission, the board of education adopted the Plan as its eighth grade civics text. Students learned in the introduction, "This book is intended to convince the child that he owes loyalty to the city that gave him his education and offers him an opportunity to enter any one of her great fields of industrial or professional activity." This was followed by a Chicago catechism on planning. "What do careful persons do before they undertake any important task?" They planned. "Who decided to build Babylon according to a plan?" To the text's admitted surprise, "Singularly, perhaps, it was a woman," Queen Semiramis. "Why is Paris one of the largest and wealthiest cities of the world?" Obviously, "because it was well planned and well built" by its leaders. Chicago could do no less.9

The Plan succeeded perfectly as civics instruction. In 1930 the journalist Henry Justin Smith wrote, "Young men and women in their 20s have not forgotten that book. The children became voters. When in later years they were presented with ballots including Chicago Plan projects, they voted 'Yes' almost automatically."10

Thompson also said yes to what constituted a no-lose proposition. The working class got jobs and the business class got the public works they wanted. For Thompson, city planning meant power. He knew that politicians would control contracts, jobs, start-up times, and completion dates. So he campaigned for an underground Chicago Plan and met with Charles Wacker after the election. The new mayor had seen the future, and it was best if planned.¹¹

Planning—or, more precisely, its realization in massive construction projects—carried considerable public immunity. Voters did not mind the outrageous politician who also built and paved. Thompson was not the only one of his era to make this discovery; he was merely its foremost practitioner and beneficiary. In Boston, John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald made a habit of singing "Sweet Adeline" at public appearances and referring to the "Dearos" of his dear North End. But Fitzgerald also understood that real success depended on some kind of accommodation with Back Bay and State Street. In those parts of town he used a different appeal, one that promised a bigger, better, busier Boston.¹²

Unlike Fitzgerald or Thompson, James Michael Curley never bothered with multiple images. Curley campaigned for mayor ten times with a most consistent disdain for the Brahmin establishment. He ignored the world of the Cabots and the Lowells for that part of Boston "where the Caseys speak only to the Curleys and the Curleys speak only to whom they damn' well please." Many of his public works—parks and hospitals, beaches and schools—were intended for the benefit of Irish Boston and, by extension, James Curley; projects were constructed in other sections in part because they promised more work for the Curleys and Caseys. As the joke on diplomat Curley suggested, he was entirely capable of paving the Polish Corridor—or perhaps digging a tunnel beneath.¹³

The situation was much the same in New York. Tammany-backed mayors did as Charles Francis Murphy instructed. So they built public works and avoided scandals. If John Hylan made the five-cent fare into an article of faith, that was his business. After Murphy's death, Tammany lost its sense of caution, and Jimmy Walker led to Fiorello La Guardia. Yet for all his honesty, La Guardia resembled his predecessors in at least one respect. His building program suggested an efficient Tammany. And where Thompson built according to plan, La Guardia followed his (Robert) Moses. 14

Thompson had to wait a year for the completion of the first major Burnham Plan project; until then, he relied on a series of gestures to cultivate business support. His Chicago spirit revival committee included Insull, Wacker, and chewing-gum magnate William Wrigley Jr. A "revival" meeting was held at the Auditorium in late May. During a moment of civic

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rapture, Wacker revealed the political importance of public works: "Success in this direction will place the name of William Hale Thompson on the brightest page of Chicago's history as the most constructive mayor Chicago has ever had." 15

By summer Thompson was ready to confront a related problem—the lack of city tourism. Together with the Chicago Summer Resort Bureau, the art staff of the *Tribune*, and the Posterette Company, he introduced the Posterette. The stamp-sized views of Chicago tourist attractions were to adorn mail leaving the city. People exposed to the Posterette would then feel the urge to visit, assuming they were unaware that the health department wanted an extra \$10,000 for its mosquito war. In June, Thompson appeared in suburban Maywood for the opening of a possible major tourist attraction, an auto speedway. He was confident the city would support it as both a "sporting proposition" and a "civic enterprise." 16

Before he hammered in a ceremonial gold spike, Thompson made sure to show a union card. But the display did not cause panic in the papers that the new mayor was dangerously pro-labor. On the contrary, in mid-June 1915 they were downright complimentary. Thompson had passed his first labor test in office. The *Tribune* admitted, "The community owes him a substantial debt of gratitude" while the *Daily News* said, "Mayor Thompson is a real conciliator." ¹⁷

The editorials praised Thompson for helping to settle a strike by street-car and el workers. Locking both sides in his office overnight, he forced union and company officials to accept arbitration. "I am not going to let them leave until they make peace," he told reporters. This was how the middle class and business wanted strikes resolved—fast enough so that the walk or truck ride into work retained its quaintness. An agreement was reached within three days.¹⁸

The new administration continued to surprise throughout its first months. The police unveiled "flying squadrons" of patrol cars to spearhead their latest crime drive. When the squadrons netted sixty suspects in one day, Thompson looked to be the effective crime fighter. In June he emerged as the business-minded yet compassionate public official in an economy drive targeting workers making big salaries. "If we go after the street laborer," he explained, "we strike at a man who can ill afford the loss of money and at the same time our streets will show the difference." 19

Thompson's economy extended into the police department, long regarded by the public as somewhere between inefficient and corrupt. In 1909 the city brought in a New York police captain to conduct secret inspections of the force. Under Thompson, Police Chief Charles Healey did not

revive "Piperizing," as the custom was called. Healey was more direct. He removed one hundred officers on the grounds they were overaged and underproductive.²⁰

Two other events in 1915 tested Thompson's new image; it held on both occasions. In late July, Thompson traveled to the San Francisco Panama Pacific International Exposition. At Los Angeles he argued with Mayor Charles Sebastian over the respective advantages of a park system over a good climate and a lake breeze over an ocean breeze. Then, on Saturday, July 24, the excursion steamer *Eastland* capsized at its mooring on the Chicago River. Most of the passengers on board were Western Electric Company employees and family, at least 811 of whom drowned.

Thompson immediately returned home to coordinate relief efforts. The mayor's office served as the disaster center, and a relief fund was established under the chairmanship of the philanthropist Julius Rosenwald. Thompson later led a funeral procession of five thousand people through the working-class, largely Bohemian Little Village neighborhood, home to many of the victims. When he said, "I am here to emphasize the grief and indignation of this great city," he may have spoken in all sincerity. If merely performance, it still persuaded his audience.²¹

The Eastland caught Chicago by surprise; temperance did not. Local temperance groups had become active soon after Thompson's election. May 23 was declared Dry Sunday with sermons in some fifty churches devoted to the subject. According to the Reverend C. T. Papadopoulos of the First Greek Evangelical Church, the greatest enemy of the Greek people was not Bulgarians or Turks, "It is drink." Other congregations discovered similar threats. When the Christian Endeavor Conference met six weeks later, the Reverend Philip W. Yarrow requested that the blue laws be enforced during the convention. Thompson took up Yarrow's idea in October, when he revived the Sunday closing laws, unenforced since the 1870s. "It's a great satisfaction to feel that you are following your conscience," an ostensibly reborn Thompson said, "and as long as I believe that I have the confidence of the people, I'll do my level best to serve them." 22

Billy Sunday and the gubernatorial candidate Frank Lowden were among those who approved. "I can imagine the howl when the news reached hell, and I am sure the devil is in bed with pneumonia," the evangelist said. Lowden was so impressed by public reaction that he promised dry Sundays statewide if he were elected.²³

But the saloon closings did not unfold without controversy. Late in October Thompson attended the Home Exposition at the Coliseum; in

what may have been the only grape-juice toast of his public life, he saluted the temperance efforts of William Jennings Bryan. For Thompson, temperance was simply an issue that allowed him to impress WASP voters. There would be some easy publicity, perhaps a few comments in the press, and then a new issue when the old one grew stale. It was not supposed to cut so deeply.

Attacks came from both sides. Some "drys" refused to believe they had an ally. According to the Anti-Saloon League, Thompson acted because he feared indictment for failure to enforce the law. The United Societies questioned his motivation from the other end. A largely ethnic, umbrella organization of antitemperance groups, the United Societies produced a signed pledge from the spring campaign; candidate Thompson had promised he would not enforce the blue laws. While Thompson tried to fend off his critics, 44,000 "wets" marched in protest.²⁴

And yet the damage was surprisingly minor. In December the Reverend J. P. Brushingham offered a vigorous—and dry—defense of Thompson. Shortly after the election, Thompson had preached from the pulpit of Brushingham's South Park Avenue Methodist-Episcopal Church on the importance of "playgrounds for our boys and girls." Brushingham now returned the favor. "If these many enemies should succeed in destroying him as mayor and Anton Cermak [secretary of the United Societies] and his friends should dominate our civic life," Brushingham wrote a fellow pastor at the Church of the Covenant, "we would have no Sunday closing in the next 50 years, no more than we had in the last 50 years." 25

Popular opinion tended to support Brushingham. By February 1916, city hall was confident enough to deny a permit for the showing of the film *The Right to Live*. The movie's plot centered on the travails of Mayor William Halson, forced to deal with the Sunday closing question. City censors apparently did not care for art imitating life, and the offending scenes were removed.²⁶

Each in their own way, the United Societies and Brushingham vindicated Thompson's election strategy. Groups hostile to temperance might march in force, but they had not yet learned to vote that way. For a while Thompson could appear the reformer, even the censor, and do well by those middle-class and immigrant groups who had elected him. It all worked so well that his name appeared, briefly, on the presidential primary ballot in Nebraska.

Thompson spoke to Chicago's WASP middle-class voters in other ways. They were a demographic minority feeling pressed by the working-class and immigrant majority. In May 1916, a member of a woman's church

group explained to the *New Republic* how Thompson eased those fears. "Do you know why my people don't mind this spoils' talk in the newspapers?" she asked. "Well, I'll tell you. They tell us that the city hall has filled up with Catholics, that the Pope is the real power in Chicago." Thompson's supporters "say it may be necessary to crack the civil service law a little to get the Catholics out. My people are willing to see the law broken for that reason."²⁷

Exploited carefully, religious prejudice offered advantages both specific and general. Thompson wanted to dismantle civil service, yet avoid criticism for it. If done correctly, the religious issue promised that and more. Because non-Protestant Chicago tended to be blue collar, religious prejudice was not far removed from its class counterpart; the dislikes of the clerk and bookkeeper could be reworked to attract the employer.

As Thompson (a nonpracticing Methodist) began his term, religious tensions needed little encouragement. In the Southwest Side neighborhood of Gage Park, hostilities centered on a new public school. Catholic parents protested that it would be too close to the St. Rita parish school. According to the *Tribune*, the situation "almost created a religious war" in the surrounding area. Further east, "almost" did not apply.²⁸

A group calling itself the Guardians of Liberty was active in the Protestant neighborhoods of the South Side. The Guardians devoted themselves to such diverse topics as immigration restriction, the defeat of the Catholic Robert Sweitzer, nomination of allies to the board of education, and a better understanding of the Knights of Columbus. Readers of the *Illinois Guardian* newsletter learned that four knocks at the door and the password "Tempest Fugit" gained admittance to KOC meetings. In March 1916, the Guardians sponsored a series of rallies with an alleged former priest as the featured speaker; for some reason, booking a hall proved difficult. Eventually, the Guardians rented space at Garfield Boulevard and Halsted, in the heavily Irish-Catholic parish of Visitation. The former priest was prevented from taking the stage by protestors the *Tribune* described as a mob.²⁹

The Guardians supported Thompson, in their words "a good non-Catholic." They also enjoyed the new political environment that accompanied his election. Shortly before the *Eastland* disaster, a state senate committee convened for hearings on the condition of Chicago's schools. The sessions could have doubled as a Guardian recruitment drive. Superintendent Ella Flagg Young was among those who testified. Young had been a student of John Dewey at the University of Chicago and superintendent since 1909. Dewey's ideas on democracy in education had found a receptive audience. As superintendent, Young encouraged teacher participation in decision

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making, and, unlike her male predecessors, she supported the Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF) and organized labor. When city business leaders tried to get a vocational education bill through the General Assembly, she joined labor groups in opposition.³⁰

The committee could have treated Young in any number of ways; it chose humiliation. Young was forced to deny rumors that she was Catholic, maintained an altar in her downtown hotel room, and had a priest for a son. "I have never been in a Catholic church except at the funeral of a member of the board or a teacher," she informed listeners. "I am a Presbyterian." Young also was criticized as a poor administrator. She retired before year's end to be replaced by John N. Shoop. He was a friend of Thompson and, as noted in the *Tribune*, a Mason.³¹

One of Young's critics had been Jacob Loeb, an insurance executive appointed to the school board by Carter Harrison. A week before Young's testimony, Loeb charged that the recent deficit budget adopted by the board was the product of "frenzied feminine finance" and would mean the end to progressive innovation in the school system. In his own committee testimony, Loeb decried "the lady labor slugger" who "fights with poisoned tongue and assassinates reputation." The inference was to a CTF leadership that included president Catherine Groggin and business representative Margaret A. Haley.³²

Following Loeb's remarks, leaders from the CTF and the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) protested to the senate committee. Their appearance translated into anti-labor coverage in middle-class Republican newspapers. The *Daily News* ran a page-one story that the CTF regularly used intimidation against the board; the *Tribune* claimed, "Union Heads Try Dictators' Role in School Quiz." The reaction was precisely the kind of class bias Thompson wanted to exploit.³³

With a new school year approaching, the board considered a motion by Loeb to deny union membership to teachers. Visiting in New York, Thompson supported the action with a view of public education that was simplicity itself: "What the children of Chicago need is a good, sensible plain education and not a lot of frills and fads. It seems to me we're getting away from the Three Rs and into hot water." He was not finished: "Several years ago an effort was made to organize the police force of Chicago along the lines of the New York police organization. City employees should be prohibited from organizing against the municipal government." Thompson knew the comment would be popular among those made uneasy about unionized teachers. Loeb's election as board president in December was meant to impress those same people.³⁴

When the board passed Loeb's resolution, or the Loeb Rule as it was called, some two thousand teachers were asked to resign immediately from the CTF. Over the next twenty months, the board and teachers fought constantly over the question of union membership. Teachers protested the rule at an Auditorium rally that September. Superintendent Young, American Federation of Labor president Samuel Gompers, and Assistant Secretary of Labor (and former school board member) Louis F. Post all attended. A Chicago writer later attacked Loeb in free verse:

You're the man who is leading the school board fight on the Teachers' Federation.

And you forget, your memory slips, your heart doesn't picture How you and your fathers were spit upon in the face, And now [sic] the soldiers and police misused your women—Just because they were Jews, and in Kovno Anybody could get away with what they did to a Jew woman or a Jew girl;

And now you, a Jew, stand up here in Chicago and act proud Because you have in effect spit in the faces of Chicago women, accused them, belittled them.

It was the work of an impassioned if not entirely poetic Carl Sandburg.³⁵ After the CTF won a court injunction, the board amended the Loeb Rule to forbid membership in organizations that included nonteachers; the measure was intended to force the CTF out of the American Federation of Labor. An appellate court victory for the teachers brought a third version of the rule in June 1916, when the board voted to limit tenure to one year. Thompson continued to back Loeb's efforts, now on the grounds that the system employed too many seventy-five year olds.

A group of Methodist ministers meeting that June claimed "we would not appeal to sectarian or religious prejudice," but they worried over unspecified "influences that on the one hand attack the public schools as godless and on the other so manipulate a preponderance of representation on the teaching force and so control their representatives as to facilitate or make possible their designs." The Catholicism of Haley and other CTF members lay at the heart of the ministers' concerns. Loeb, meanwhile, claimed the purest of motivations for his stand: "It was taken in the interest of the children." ³⁶

This time the union was denied an injunction. The board then was able to declare sixty-eight teachers incompetent, thirty-seven of them CTF members; the new union president Ida Fursman and a sister of Margaret

Haley were among those dismissed. With the system made more "efficient," Loeb offered three vacant district superintendencies to board members for their friends.

With the teachers subdued, Thompson quickly moved on to his next challenge, the police. In July 1916, Police Chief Healey disbanded a policeman's benefit society. When it reappeared under a different name, Healey suspended four members from the force. The chief had precedent on his side—Carter Harrison II twice moved against such organizations.³⁷

Organized policemen and teachers seemed vaguely disloyal to middleclass voters, and trade unionism was an option best denied public employees. ("If teachers may organize and attempt collective bargaining," the *Tri*bune reasoned logically, "firemen may do the same.") Yet for those directly affected, it was a matter of the most basic self-interest.³⁸

Professional status offered little protection to municipal employees. A special education commission unintentionally showed why in 1898. Chaired by University of Chicago president William Rainey Harper, the commission endorsed a smaller school board and increased authority for the superintendent. The report also reflected the bias of an all-male panel. The commission recommended higher pay only for male teachers, considered important as role models for boys.³⁹

The commission's report was not an isolated incident. In early 1915 Jacob Loeb asked teachers to accept a 7½ percent pay cut from salaries that reached a maximum of \$1,500. The police faced similar conditions: a \$1,320 salary, a 365-day work year, and 24-hour duty every third day. Yet without the benefit of formal organization, police were even more vulnerable than teachers. And yet despite grievances, the typical Chicago police officer followed orders. Thompson did not fail to exploit that advantage.⁴⁰

The Republican mayor displayed a union card and arbitrated strikes only as a situation allowed. Transportation directly affected the middle class, the garment industry did not, and Thompson knew the difference. In late September, two weeks before the blue law revival, an estimated 15,000 members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers struck local manufacturers. Under the leadership of Sidney Hillman, the union demanded a forty-eight-hour work week, overtime pay, collective bargaining, and an end to the use of the black list. Management rejected both the demands and the opportunity to work with an arbitration committee established by the city council. Charging the strike was the work of an "alien agitator," employers refused to negotiate.

Thompson adopted an identical position. When a strike delegation including Hillman, John Fitzpatrick of the CFL, and settlement worker Mary

McDowell requested a meeting, he avoided them. Six weeks later, he consented to see Jane Addams, only to reprise Pontius Pilate: "The mayor of Chicago will not go into this because there is violence, and as mayor, he will stay out of it because there is violence."

In fact the city had been involved from the beginning. Some five hundred policemen were assigned to join another five hundred private detectives on strike duty in the garment district. It was no easy task, in part because Police Chief Healey did not know whether strikers had the legal right to picket. Healey eventually decided they did, though he failed to notify anyone. Assigned to a duty without proper training or supervision, members of the strike force took what employers offered. Money and gifts were a way to complement the department pay scale.

Officers patrolled the district on foot and horseback and by motorcycle. Confrontations occurred regularly between strikers and the so-called Cossacks. Police made 1,971 arrests, which led to one jail sentence and two court fines. When the city council directed Healey to stop certifying company guards as special police, Thompson went to his corporation counsel. The city's lawyer obliged with an opinion declaring the order "null and void."⁴²

Shortly before the strike collapsed in mid-December, management spokesman Jacob J. Abt dismissed employee complaints: "The conditions in the clothing industry in Chicago are better than in any other city in the United States." Depending on class perspective, Abt was right, and Thompson deserved credit for making those conditions possible. Chicago had elected a mayor who was full of pleasant surprises for the middle class and business. In the eyes of at least one observer, Thompson was a talent worth watching. "Do not forget," the banker and Republican leader Charles Dawes wrote Senator Lawrence Sherman, "that unless it is prevented by unwise conduct in little things that Thompson, if he handles himself right, is a coming man." 43

Dawes proved astute, even clairvoyant: The politician failed to handle himself right because Thompson and Fred Lundin never paid the necessary attention to details. Together, they lacked the patience needed to nurture the image of respectable mayor. Their critics were led by Alderman Charles Merriam, who attacked the "shameless, brazen and obscene" work of Thompson's civil service commission. According to a watchdog group, the new administration made almost 9,200 temporary appointments in its first four months. As Richard J. Daley demonstrated forty years later, "temporary" employees might qualify for a city pension before they acquired permanent civil service standing.⁴⁴

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Thompson gave some of those jobs to blacks for two very practical reasons—they were good Republicans, and he had to satisfy obligations incurred to the Second Ward organization of George Harding and Martin Madden. By September 1915, there were seven hundred black municipal employees, up from five hundred in the Harrison administration. News of the increase led to an anonymous attack on Thompson's hiring practices. The mailboxes in city hall were filled with mock theater handbills. They announced, "An Amazingly Stupendous Production of the Pathetic Melodrama Uncle Tom's Cabin In Many Acts." Listed in the role of Uncle Tom was Big Bill Thompson.⁴⁵

Harold Ickes was not as crude in his remarks. Ickes simply pointed to the Reverend Archibald Carey and Louis B. Anderson of the corporation counsel office as proof Thompson was reassembling the Lorimer machine; both men were organization Republicans—and black. Long involved in the local civil rights movement (and president of the Chicago NAACP chapter in the 1920s), Ickes had some idea of what life entailed for black Chicago. But he was blinded by partisan politics. Ickes never understood Thompson's popularity with African Americans or the limits of his commitment to them.⁴⁶

Those boundaries were set in the controversy surrounding D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, banned by Thompson soon after he took office. The producers won court injunctions against the city ban and a state measure passed in 1917. Whether at the Illinois Theatre in June 1915, the Colonial ("Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye! One More Week Demanded, Chicago Simply Will Not Let Us Leave!") in November 1916, or the Victoria seven months later, Chicago audiences periodically were treated to Griffith's peculiar depiction of Reconstruction. After his initial action, Thompson largely ignored the movie and surrounding controversy. "The *Birth of a Nation* has left an awful bad taste in the mouths of the thinking citizens of this city," observed the *Chicago Defender*, the paper of record in the black community.⁴⁷

Blacks also learned Thompson could be made to back down on city hiring practices. In February 1917 (when, as the *Defender* noted, the white press again was calling city hall Uncle Tom's Cabin), the municipal tuberculosis sanitarium dismissed a black physician. Dr. Roscoe Giles was not accused of inadequate training or negligence. A graduate of Cornell, Giles was unpopular with white patients on account of his race. He was removed after six hours on the job. While sympathetic, the *Tribune* urged Giles to use tact in fighting for "workable equality." The dismissal coincided with the arrest of Alderman Oscar DePriest on vice charges. Thompson with-

held comment on both incidents. It was a silence that alienated few black voters. Until reformers and Democrats learned to offer an alternative, black Chicago viewed William Hale Thompson as the island, all else a cruel sea.⁴⁸

Reform rhetoric, black patronage, class and religious bias: Thompson sought power through issues that taken together did not allow for many mistakes. But Thompson erred constantly. He failed to silence Charles Merriam or placate factional leaders Edward Brundage and Charles Deneen; both wanted more recognition from city hall. And without adequate preparation, Thompson took on the city council. He chose the 1916 city council elections to win control of the budget process and aldermanic committee assignments.

The city charter gave the power of the purse to the council. Thompson understood the importance of executive budget-making; in the months before the 1916 elections, city officials and members of the council finance committee clashed over numerous funding questions. Thompson wanted what Richard J. Daley enjoyed, a council loyal down to the chairman of its finance committee. Not only was Thompson denied that but he also damaged his good-government image in attacks on the Municipal Voters' League.

The league made an inviting target, but not for the kind of politician Thompson claimed to be. Since its inception in the 1890s, the league had combined machine tactics with reform ends. It endorsed candidates, staged rallies, and made deals to get its allies elected. The league won its greatest victory in 1901: The council agreed to select members of the committee on committees from among those aldermen who had signed the league pledge of good government.⁴⁹

Throughout the winter of 1916, Thompson attacked his opponents. Often introduced by the Reverend J. P. Brushingham, Thompson declared he faced the opposition of the "Progressive bosses as well as the [usual] Republican bosses" in his fight for a better council. He labeled Merriam the "biggest hypocrite in Chicago" and accused the league of lies. He stumped against "traction bosses," "whiskey bosses," and "four-flushing reformers" who opposed real reform, as interpreted by his own newly incorporated municipal voters' league. The campaign marked the reemergence of Thompson the tent performer. ⁵⁰

Brushingham warned that some of the mayor's aldermanic foes were anarchists, and ministers from seven Protestant congregations signed a public letter urging the election of Thompson's aldermanic slate. But the strategy collapsed in scandal eight days before the election. The superintendent of social surveys resigned in protest over alleged salary kickbacks

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to the mayor's wife, the money going to support her widowed sister. "Maysie [Thompson] says you've got to come across" became a slogan for the opposition. Whereas seven ministers supported Thompson, fourteen publicly opposed him.⁵¹

With the help of Oscar DePriest in the council, Thompson blocked any embarrassing investigation. It was all the consolation he was to get. The league again influenced the makeup of aldermanic committees; seven of nine ward contests went to the opposition; a second scandal prevented him from electing enough Republican committeemen that spring to control party slatemaking.⁵²

As part of his good-government image, Thompson had kept Dr. Theodore Sachs in charge of the municipal tuberculosis sanitarium. Sachs was popular with Chicago's social reform and public health leaders as a talented administrator. Under his leadership, the city formulated an effective response to what then was a very real White Death. Sachs never realized that his refusal to politicize the sanitarium made him a liability.

He resigned in late March 1916, charging that Thompson wanted him to turn the facility into a patronage preserve. Two days before the committee and aldermanic runoff elections, Sachs hanged himself; both the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* gave prominent play to his suicide note, addressed "To the people of Chicago." Whatever chance Thompson had of controlling the party machinery ended with Sachs's letter, if not his death. 53

But Sachs's death did not hurt Thompson beyond the committee elections. In part the suicide actually helped by removing and compromising an articulate critic. The call for a memorial to Sachs led two South Side ministers to wonder if with such a move "we are almost in danger of glorifying suicide." Sachs soon became old news, to be replaced by national politics and world affairs.⁵⁴

As spring wore on, Chicagoans grew more interested in Pancho Villa's border raids and the debate over preparedness. In March, Thompson taunted Woodrow Wilson with an offer of Chicago's mounted police to capture Villa; two months later, he embraced national defense. "I'm for preparedness," he said. "They'll be thousands in Chicago who will indicate their desire for preparedness. Just arrange the parade—they'll march." The question of neutrality was left to others, like John Coughlin. That May, the First Ward alderman introduced a motion in the city council urging that the government use every reasonable means to avoid war with Germany. 55

Thompson performed magnificently given the chance to produce another parade. "If Congress could only see this," he exclaimed on beholding

130,000 participants. It was enough that delegates attending the Republican National Convention witnessed the ten-hour spectacle. They appreciated a mayor who put on a good show and made automobiles available for personal use. The convention unfolded so smoothly Thompson easily won election as Illinois national committeeman. For the moment, the missteps of the winter and spring were forgotten.⁵⁶

Thompson again offered to work with Progressive Republicans and—at the command of candidate Charles Evans Hughes—accepted Harold Ickes as part of the state campaign committee. While relations between the two were at best tenuous, the regular and reform factions carried Illinois for Hughes; had their counterparts done as much in California, Hughes would have beaten Woodrow Wilson. Thompson enjoyed a second personal victory with the election of Frank Lowden as governor. Lowden would control the Lincoln and West Parks Boards in the city. Thompson expected to share in the patronage both systems generated.⁵⁷

The presidential campaign coincided with a shift in Thompson's appeal. The unofficial opening of Municipal Pier on the Fourth of July had confirmed the promise of public works. Fifty thousand people came to see the first major work of the Burnham Plan. At the same time city hall was pushing the Twelfth Street and Michigan Boulevard projects. By October, a new image was crystallizing. Thompson no longer was a reformer-builder, just a builder. "The beauty, usefulness and productiveness of some of the celebrated cities of the old world," he told the city council in an address, "such as Paris, Berlin and Copenhagen, is due to the effective plans and regulations for the use of property which are followed for the good of the whole." ⁵⁸

Thompson may never have been particularly comfortable posing as a reformer early on or an Anglophobe in the 1920s, but he honestly saw himself as Big Bill the Builder. During his council speech, he announced the hiring of Jarvis Hunt to execute a lakefront plan. Hunt was a talented though less famous architect than Daniel Burnham, who had made lakeshore development a central feature of his city plan.

It would not do simply to follow Burnham because Thompson's big plans had to appear solely his own. Thompson served a city little taken by magnanimity in business or politics, and he saw no reason to try to force a change. Instead, he began a Chicago mayoral tradition—credit went to the politician who built rather than to those who merely planned. Burnham, dead since 1912, was in no position to disagree. 59

The city council fared little better than Burnham. Projects were financed by bond issues, prepared by the council, and passed by voter referendum.

Technically, aldermen deserved equal billing with Thompson as builders, but there were too many names to fit on one marquee. Republicans and Democrats, this faction or that, who was a voter to believe? If only on this issue, one voice canceled the many, and Thompson received credit as primary builder. It was his revenge for having to contend with an alwaysfactious body.

However, the evolution in image was not enough to restore Thompson's earlier popularity. It might have in a year when Maclay Hoyne was not running for reelection. Hoyne had served as state's attorney for Cook County since 1912. Ostensibly devoted to law enforcement, the state's attorney could use the power of indictment to make and break political alliances or capitalize on some sensational event. Hoyne indulged in all three.

Allied with Carter Harrison, Hoyne closed down the Levee District in 1914. The raids showered him with publicity as a foe of vice, and they crippled the saloon politicians who supported Roger Sullivan. Hoyne moved beyond the saloons later that year when he prosecuted the businessman and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald for tax evasion. The indictment led to more press coverage but no conviction.⁶⁰

Hoyne was ambitious if nothing else. He helped arbitrate the 1915 traction strike, and he represented the teachers in court against the Loeb Rule. However, like Thompson, he never let the need for consistency intrude. The graft indictment of labor leaders in late 1915 could have been coincidence—or an attempt to exploit anti-union sentiment from the garment workers' strike. In any case, the state's attorney was a politician unafraid of bipartisan alliances.

During Christmas week 1915, Hoyne and Thompson announced they were joining forces to clean up the city. Whatever the results of the crime sweep, Thompson found the arrangement to his liking. It proved itself two months later, when a group of reform aldermen called for the indictment of two civil service commissioners, both Thompson allies. Hoyne announced his office would stay out of the controversy.⁶¹

Entente lasted through midsummer, when politics demanded a return to strict partisanship for both sides. Hoyne supported Governor Edward Dunne for reelection while Thompson backed Frank Lowden; the mayor also had his own candidate for state's attorney. In August, Hoyne went public with suspicions of widespread graft in city hall. By the politically significant month of October, he was ready to act against the chief of police.

Hoyne raided department offices to seize records and hinted at the arrest of Police Chief Charles Healey. Thompson in turn posted a police guard at city hall; he predicted the raid would cost Hoyne 50,000 votes. The socialist state's attorney candidate, William A. Cunnea, invited "that eminent raider" to invade his offices as well. Cunnea suggested Hoyne "bring his jimmy to bear on my office and safe" where there were affidavits from strikebreakers on illegal activities during the garment workers' strike. The posturing of Thompson and Hoyne so irked the *Tribune* it uttered "A Plague On Both Your Houses" editorially and endorsed Cunnea. 62

Hoyne won reelection in November. Healey resigned the following month, and in January 1917 Hoyne had him arrested, at home during dinner. Healey and nineteen others were charged with bribery and conspiracy. A conviction could have altered the city's political alignments. Thompson would have gone into the 1919 mayoral race saddled with an embarrassing scandal—and Hoyne a difficult opponent. It was not to be. Despite using 1,470 wire-tap phone conversations as evidence, Hoyne lost in court. Healey had the foresight to retain Clarence Darrow.⁶³

The Healey trial actually constituted a rematch for Hoyne and Darrow. In the late spring of 1917, Darrow won a not guilty verdict for another public figure named in Hoyne's vice probe. Using corruption as a measure, Hoyne could have gone after John Coughlin and Michael Kenna. A state's attorney suddenly possessed of mayoral ambitions, however, did not indict powerful Democrats, even old enemies. Hoyne instead chose Oscar DePriest, a Thompson ally who happened (again, perhaps coincidentally) to be black.

DePriest was more than a loyal black vote in the city council; he was a player in major political skirmishes. When the administration needed him, DePriest was there to assist in blocking a council graft probe or the creation of a municipal garbage pick-up fleet. (In Chicago even garbage, or the contracts for hauling it, was political.) The support did not come free. Two days after the 1916 Republican convention, DePriest sponsored an ordinance to revoke the license of any public place that discriminated on the basis of race. The *Tribune* story headline read, "Negro Alderman Asks Law Forcing Society of Races."

While Hoyne knew DePriest left Thompson exposed to race prejudice, the state's attorney did not anticipate how well the defendant would acquit himself on the witness stand. The difference between black and white gambling, DePriest observed, was that the activity at the black South Side Carnival was "not quite so raw" as at the lily-white South Shore Country Club, and the proceeds of the former went to charity.⁶⁵

The testimony helped Darrow win an acquittal although it did little for Thompson's image as a respectable politician. "Reform" was a term both

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loose and forgiving. In New York, Mayor John Purroy Mitchel increased school classroom size as he reduced the education budget and asked teachers to volunteer their time for summer school. But Mitchel qualified as a reformer because he opposed Tammany Hall. So too Thompson could fight teacher and police organizations, arrest striking garment workers, and close the saloons on Sunday; all suggested reform of a type. However, a corrupt police chief and political recognition of black Chicagoans were not ways to keep middle-class support.⁶⁶

Still, midway through his first term, Thompson had a last chance to recover. In early March 1917, the *Tribune* considered a hypothetical trade between city hall and the Sears Roebuck Company: Thompson for company president Julius Rosenwald. Sears would not deteriorate rapidly, according to an editorial. "On the contrary, the city would gain less than the corporation would lose by the exchange." For once the paper blamed Chicago's problems on the system of local government rather than the particular Republican who controlled part of it.⁶⁷

A preparedness rally took place at the Auditorium three weeks later; it was, in many ways, a cast call for patriot-politicians. The audience sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers," just as others had for Theodore Roosevelt at the Coliseum in 1912. Among those participating were former Secretary of War Jacob M. Dickinson, Governor Frank Lowden, and the *Tribune's* Robert R. McCormick, soon to go overseas with the American Expeditionary Force. Missing from the activities was Thompson, who could have quieted critics by accepting the popular role of patriot-mayor. But he had chosen another, far more demanding part. The *Tribune* and much of Chicago never understood why.⁶⁸

Notes

- 1. Letter reproduced in *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 7, 1915; Charles H. Dennis, *Victor Lawson: His Time and His Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 318–19. Lawson did not respond as Thompson hoped: "I should be lacking in frankness, however, if I did not say to you that I have no confidence in either you or your chief supporters."
- 2. For the Lager Beer Riots, see Emmett Dedmon, Fabulous Chicago, enlarged ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1981), 52-53; for the cholera and Yerkes remarks, see Barbara C. Schaaf, Mr. Dooley's Chicago (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977), 334; for autos at Lorimer's rally, see Joel Arthur Tarr, A Study in Boss Politics: William Lorimer of Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 266; for autos at the Prosperity Day Parade, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 27, 1915; for horses and autos, see Homer Hoyt, One Hundred Years of Land Values

in Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1933; reprint, New York: Arno Press/New York Times, 1970), 485. Registered automobiles did not outnumber horse-drawn vehicles until 1916.

Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt claim Fred Lundin conceived of the parade idea. If so, Thompson quickly adopted it as his own. *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 119–20. Parades continue to be a staple of Chicago politics. St. Patrick's Day now attracts black politicians seeking white support, and the reverse occurs at the Bud Billiken Day Parade.

- 3. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 27, 1915.
- 4. Insull quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 120.
- 5. Collier quoted in Bessie Louise Pierce, ed., As Others See Chicago: Impressions of Visitors, 1673–1933 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 406.
- 6. Thomas S. Hines, Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 315.
 - 7. Ibid., 327.
- 8. For background on the Plan, see ibid., 338-39; Chicago Plan Commission, Ten Years' Work of the Chicago Plan Commission (1920), Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS).
- 9. Walter D. Moody, Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago: Municipal Economy (Chicago: Chicago Plan Commission, 1915), 22, 33, 38, 40, 51.
- 10. Lloyd Lewis and John Justin Smith, Chicago: The History of Its Reputation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 318.
- 11. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 25, 1915. Richard J. Daley's success as a public builder is due in large part to the legacy of the Plan.
- 12. Fitzgerald's career is covered in John Henry Cutler, "Honey Fitz," Three Steps to the White House: The Life and Times of John F. (Honey Fitz) Fitzgerald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962). Also valuable on Fitzgerald and James M. Curley is William V. Shannon, The American Irish (New York: MacMillan, 1963). Unfortunately, urban historians have shied away from biographies of machine politicians.
- 13. Shannon, American Irish, 216. The best overview of Boston politics is Ronald J. Formisano and Constance K. Burns, eds., Boston 1700–1980: The Evolution of Urban Politics (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), especially the chapters by Charles H. Trout on Curley and William V. Shannon on the city's Irish mayors.
- 14. Thomas Kessner offers a far harsher assessment of Tammany and without the parallel to La Guardia. See Fiorello La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), esp. chaps. 3, 4, and 6. More sympathetic to Tammany are John M. Allswang, Bosses, Machines, and Urban Voters, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), and Nancy Joan Weiss, Charles Francis Murphy, 1858–1924: Respectability and Responsibility in Tammany Politics (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1968).
 - 15. Wacker quoted in Chicago Tribune, May 28, 1915.

- 16. For tourism, see Chicago Tribune, June 25, 1915, June 26, 1915; for autoracing, see Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1915.
- 17. Chicago Tribune editorial, June 17, 1915; Chicago Daily News editorial, June 16, 1915.
 - 18. Chicago Tribune, June 14-16, 1915; Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 123-26.
- 19. For crime, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 30, 1915, May 30, 1915; for the economy, see Chicago Tribune, June 5, 1915.
- 20. For police, see James W. Errant, "Trade Unionism in the Civil Service of Chicago, 1895–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 118; for the overage announcement, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1915.
- 21. For breezes, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 1915; For the *Eastland*, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 26–29, 1915; for Little Village, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1915.
- 22. For Dry Sunday, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1915; for the blue law request, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1915; for the enforcement remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 5, 1915. Thompson resembled Lot fleeing Sodom in the way he announced the saloon closings. He immediately left for the West Coast.
 - 23. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 5, 1915, Oct. 7, 1915.
- 24. For the grape juice toast, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1915; for the Anti-Saloon League, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1915; for the United Societies, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 6, 1915, Oct. 7, 1915, Nov. 8, 1915; see also Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 126-31.
 - 25. For Brushingham, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 13, 1915, Dec. 6, 1915 (quote).
 - 26. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 6, 1916, Feb. 20, 1916.
- 27. William L. Chenery, "The Fall of a Mayor," *New Republic* 8 (May 13, 1916): 37.
- 28. For Thompson's faith, see Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, eds., Biographical Dictionary of American Mayors, 1820–1980: Big City Mayors (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 424; for Gage Park, see Chicago Tribune, June 2, 1915, July 7, 1915.
- 29. For background on the Guardians, see *Illinois Guardian*, Robert Buck Papers, CHS; for Guardian meetings, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 2, 1916, Mar. 3, 1916, Mar. 4, 1916.
- 30. When the school issue came to a vote in the city council, Socialist aldermen John Kennedy and William Rodriguez joined Charles Merriam in favor of the site while the redoubtable John Powers was among those opposed. For the city's ethnic groups, the vote did little to encourage reform or class consciousness. Chicago Tribune, July 7, 1915. Illinois Guardian, May 1915, Buck Papers. For Young, see Julia Wrigley, Class Politics and Public Schools: Chicago, 1900–1950 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 121–24; Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 114–21.

- 31. For Young, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1915; for Shoop, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1915. The exact link between the senate committee and Thompson is unclear. Members may have wanted to bash Chicago schools for downstate consumption. Since he had not yet shaped the school board, Thompson came out ahead, particularly because of the criticism of Young.
 - 32. Wrigley, Class Politics, 126–28; Chicago Tribune, July 9, 1915, July 22, 1915. 33. Chicago Daily News, July 23, 1915; Chicago Tribune, July 23, 1915.
- 34. For Thompson's remarks, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 26, 1915; for the election of Loeb, see Chicago Board of Education, *Proceedings of the Board of Education*, Dec. 8, 1915.
- 35. For the Loeb Rule and protest rally, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 2, 1915, Sept. 9, 1915; for Sandburg's poem, see Robert L. Reid, ed., *Battleground: The Autobiography of Margaret A. Haley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 277–78.
- 36. For the injunction and amendment, see Chicago Tribune, Sept. 30, 1915; for the further court action, see Chicago Tribune, May 2, 1915; for the tenure provision, see Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1915; for remarks by Thompson, see Chicago Tribune, June 16, 1916; for remarks by ministers, see Chicago Tribune, June 27, 1916; for remarks by Loeb, see Chicago Tribune, June 28, 1916; for the Catholicism of CTF members, see George S. Counts, School and Society in Chicago (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1928; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 100.
- 37. For dismissals, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 28, 1916; for Loeb's offer, see Herrick, *Chicago Schools*, 128; for Healey's response, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 11–19, 1916; for background on benefit societies, see Errant, "Trade Unionism," chap. 6.
 - 38. Chicago Tribune, Sept. 3, 1915.
 - 39. Wrigley, Class Politics, 92-96; Reid, Battleground, 35.
 - 40. Errant, "Trade Unionism," 28, 113-14.
- 41. For the strike, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 29, 1915, and Howard Barton Myers, "The Policing of Labor Disputes in Chicago" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1929), 778–79, 796; for meetings, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 2, 1915, Nov. 19, 1915.
- 42. According to Myers, police conduct during the strike was worse than in any previous labor dispute. "Policing," 772. For background on the strike, see Myers, "Policing," 789–96; for specific aspects of police conduct, see 810–21; for court cases, see 837–39; see also City of Chicago, Opinions of the Corporation Counsel and Assistants, Nov. 15, 1915.
- 43. Chicago Tribune, Dec. 14, 1915; Dawes to Sherman, July 1, 1915, Lawrence Y. Sherman Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield.
- 44. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 5, 1915; Municipal Citizenship Committee of the Woman's City Club and the Civil Service Reform Society of Chicago, The Truth about Civil Service (1916), CHS.

- 45. For employment figures, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 17, 1915; for the "Uncle Tom" incident, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 30, 1915.
- 46. Chicago Tribune, July 13, 1915. Ickes served as president of the Chicago NAACP as part of an effort to revive the chapter. See general correspondence for 1923, Harold L. Ickes Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- 47. For the ban, see *Chicago Defender*, May 1, 1915, May 22, 1915; for court action, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 5, 1924, and *Chicago Defender*, Feb. 9, 1924; for movie ads, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1915, Nov. 16, 1916, June 8, 1917. Police raided the Victoria on June 7, but the theater advertised the movie ("Positively the Last Week") through June 14. For criticism, see *Chicago Defender*, Feb. 16, 1916.
- 48. For Giles, see Chicago Tribune, Jan. 19, 1917, Feb. 1, 1917, Feb. 3, 1917; see also Chicago Defender, Jan. 27, 1917, Feb. 10, 1917. In its February 3 edition, the Chicago Defender proclaimed, "Mayor Thompson Appoints Dr. Giles Junior Physician." That changed the next week to "Dr. Giles Is Hired and Fired." Neither story attributed a direct quote to Thompson, and both ignored the fact that the villain in the piece, Health Commissioner Dr. John Dill Robertson, was a mayoral appointee. In the The Simms' Blue Book and National Negro Business and Professional Directory, James N. Simms notes, "[Giles was] Denied admission [to the sanitarium] because of color" (Chicago: James N. Simms, 1923), 110.
- 49. For Thompson-council clashes, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 23, 1915, Jan. 4, 1916, Feb. 3, 1916; for Brundage and Deneen's actions, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 10, 1916; for the Municipal Voters' League, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 23, 1916, Mar. 24, 1916, and Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1931; reprint, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1958), 2:422–30.

In twelve years as mayor, Thompson controlled the council by party only once, from 1929 to 1931.

- 50. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 11, 1916, Feb. 16, 1916, Feb. 19, 1916, Feb. 21, 1916.
- 51. For Brushingham, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1916, Feb. 21, 1916; for Brushingham's warning and open letter, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1916, Feb. 25, 1916.
- 52. For scandal, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 22, 1916, and Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 138-39; for opposing ministers, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 28, 1916; for De Priest, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1916; for primary election results, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 1, 1916; for the Municipal Voters' League, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 24, 1916.
- 53. For Sachs's resignation, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 21, 1916. The suicide letter was reprinted in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Daily News*, Apr. 3, 1916. The *Tribune* ran a page-one facsimile while the *News* printed the note's contents on page three.
- 54. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 10, 1916. The ministers' doubts over a memorial may have been influenced by Sachs's Judaism.

- 55. For the offer to Wilson, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 15, 1916; for the parade idea and Coughlin's motion, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1916.
- 56. For the parade, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1916; for auto hospitality, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1916; for the committee election, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 7, 1916.
- 57. For Thompson and the Progressives, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1916, July 20, 1916, July 23, 1916; for Lowden, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 9, 1916, Nov. 10, 1916.
- 58. For the pier opening, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 5, 1916; for the speech, see Chicago City Council, *Proceedings of the City Council*, Oct. 2, 1916.
- 59. Chicago City Council, Proceedings, Oct. 2, 1916; Chicago Tribune, Oct. 3, 1916, Oct. 15, 1916.
- 60. For the Levee closing, see Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, Bosses in Lusty Chicago: The Story of Bathhouse John and Hinky Dink (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 318–19; for Rosenwald's indictment, see Chicago Tribune, Dec. 31, 1914, Jan. 1, 1915, Mar. 28, 1915.
- 61. For arbitration, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1915; for the Loeb injunction, see Reid, *Battleground*, 171; for the graft ring, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 4, 1915; for the crime sweep, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1915; for the council-commissioners argument, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1916.
- 62. For the rift, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1916; for the raid, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 11, 1916; for the arrest threat and Thompson's prediction, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 12, 1916; for Cunnea's invitation, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 15, 1916; for the plague editorial, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1916; for Cunnea's endorsement, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1916.
- 63. For Healey's resignation, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 12, 1916; for the arrest, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 9, 1916; for the indictment, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 24, 1918; for the phone taps, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 15, 1917, Nov. 29, 1917; for the verdict, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 13, 1918.
- 64. For DePriest's support in the council, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 25, 1916, July 1, 1916; for the ordinance, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1916.
- 65. Charles Branham, "The Transformation of Black Political Leadership in Chicago, 1864–1942" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981), 114. Branham also notes that the *Chicago Tribune*, which followed the trial closely in early June 1917, ignored DePriest's remark on country club gambling. The indictment kept DePriest from running for reelection in 1917.
- 66. For the vagaries of reform, see Melvin G. Holli, "Varieties of Urban Reform," in *American Urban History*, ed. Alexander B. Callow Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 210-22.
 - 67. Chicago Tribune editorial, Mar. 6, 1917.
 - 68. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 1, 1917.

3

The Apparent War Critic

[Studs Lonigan] imagined himself going over the top with the American army, not stopping until they captured Berlin. He saw Private Lonigan as the soldier who captured the Kaiser. He saw himself with levelled gun forcing Kaiser Bill to cower into a corner and yell Kamerad, like a yellow skunk.

-James T. Farrell, The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan

SOUTHERN WHITES never understood Chicago or its mayor. He may have shown promise—for a Republican—early on in closing the saloons, but after that one outrage followed another. There were reasons other than the war, like the page-one story in the *Atlanta Constitution* from October 1916. A group of black waiters had used a Chicago visit by Woodrow Wilson to press for a raise. Thirty waiters chosen to serve the president's lunch prepared to leave just as Wilson was set to arrive. "They had not asked for more pay, but when stopped by the steward, told him they had decided they must have a fifty percent increase on the contract price before they would begin their duties. The increase was granted."

The South was different and, according to its leaders, better. Pay raises and talk of racial equality in the North were seen as part of a grand deception. "They will not find any white man up there who will 'carry' them until the next crop time," the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* warned; the North did not care about the unemployed. "Better stay down here because when things get a little tight every one of you knows the road to the back door of some white man's kitchen." Regardless, African Americans continued to board trains for Chicago. They preferred a city whose mayor defended draft "slackers" and allowed pacifists to conduct their meetings undisturbed. It simply did not make sense.²

Atlanta and Memphis were not alone in their confusion. Wire stories that were picked up across the nation suggested things were terribly amiss in Chicago. But the newspapers never learned how much appearance differed from reality. Extraordinary conditions ruled in the Chicago sector of the home front those nineteen months of war.

As the most influential newspaper in the nation, the *New York Times* cast Thompson's antiwar image for readers (and, through its index, generations of researchers). The *Times* had never liked Thompson. During the saloon closings, editorials lampooned "Chicago's Puritan Mayor" and "The First Violinist of Civic Redemption." When Thompson spoke out against U.S. entry into World War I, the *Times* found both a disloyal critic and a steady source of news.³

The stories began in late April 1917, after Thompson refused to extend a formal invitation to the French general Joseph Joffre and a visiting Allied delegation. He explained to reporters that with Chicago "the sixth largest German city in the world," it was the presumptuous politician who "takes the position that all the people are in favor of the invitation." The *Times* saw things differently and predicted Thompson's removal from office was "hardly a matter of doubt."

Later that spring, the *Times* reported on Thompson's temporary ban on the sale of Liberty Bonds at city hall; incredibly, he had bought none himself. With summer came news that the city council was considering impeachment, though aldermen soon dropped the idea. Readers grown weary of Thompson could only agree with Episcopal bishop George Herbert Kinsolving. The Texas churchman was quoted as saying that men like Thompson "should not only be driven from the country, but driven from the earth." 5

In early August the *Times* reported that the Chicago board of education had yielded to protests over the school speller. The board voted to remove a lesson entitled "The Kaiser in the Making." Students no longer would read how young Wilhelm II refused to cheat on a Greek exam, a stand which before the war had shown, "There is in him a fundamental bent toward what is clean, manly and aboveboard." A story nine days later recounted Thompson's problems in the city of Aurora, fifty miles west of Chicago. Residents there blocked distribution of his personal newspaper, *The Republican*. A Thompson worker was directed to "take your papers and get out of the city or suffer the consequence."

The stories suggested a Thompson in retreat, only to give way to the sensations of the first week in September. Ignoring the orders of Governor Frank Lowden, Thompson allowed a convention of the People's Coun-

cil of America for Democracy and Terms of Peace. The group already had been shunned in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin before John Works and Crystal Eastman were granted their forum. Then, in the wake of the convention and related protests, Thompson counterattacked with libel suits against several critics, including the *Daily News* and the *Tribune*.⁷

The *Times*'s coverage was in no way exceptional; any paper with editorial space or the money for a wire service could do the same. To a city like Memphis, however, Chicago was an all-too-successful rival drawing away its black population. Controversies up north played well in the South, and Thompson was controversy personified. "The man who would object to a visit from Joffre to his home city may live in America and make his home here," the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* commented in May 1917, "but in principle he is absolutely un-American."

By the eve of the People's Council incident, the Commercial Appeal had reduced Thompson to a subject fit for vaudeville: "Heard the joke that Mayor Thompson wants to run for president on an anti-war platform? The only way he could run would be out of the country." The joke soured in September, when the paper recommended, "The Kaiser should tie an iron cross on Herr von Thompson and then Chicago should drop him, thus weighted, over into the lake with a 'To the fishes' epitaph."

The stories coming out of Chicago did more than shock—they helped war morale. In such cities as Atlanta, Houston, Indianapolis, New York, and St. Paul, opinion was divided on American participation in the war. But opposition or even doubt offended the loudly patriotic, so the papers chose a different course. By reporting on the People's Council or any other Thompson incident, they identified someplace else as a cesspool of disloyalty. Scandalous news with a Chicago dateline reassured a national audience of its own patriotic virtue.¹⁰

The news coverage of Thompson was intense though not complete. During the Joffre controversy, reports surfaced that the Chicago office of the federal district attorney might prosecute Thompson. Free speech had limits in wartime, and, for a moment in May 1917, it appeared Thompson would be held accountable for remarks critical of the war effort. However, the rush of news from Washington and Europe soon directed coverage away from the Justice Department's interest in Thompson.

Assistant Attorney General Samuel Graham ordered a report from District Attorney Charles F. Clyne in mid-May. The papers had quoted Assistant District Attorney James B. Fleming as saying, "Mayor Thompson has declared that he has read the Constitution. If he has, then he should know that the penalty for treason is hanging." Fleming informed superiors that

he had made no statement on a possible investigation. It was as if officials had decided to leave the mayor of Chicago alone.¹¹

The Justice Department found grounds for prosecuting war critics such as Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman, yet Thompson led a charmed public life during the war. "The history of conscription or [the] draft is that it leads to trouble, and it is a drastic measure which should never be invoked until the life of the Republic is threatened," he declared in a printed address. "I am unadulterably opposed to a draft for the purpose of forcing our young men into the trenches of Europe." 12

The remark was no more seditious than Thompson's newspaper. *The Republican* was intended for the Thompson faithful, but the *Tribune* helped give it a wider readership through periodic coverage. Learning that copies were being forwarded to Washington, the paper offered, "We are glad to learn the President is reading *The Republican*, and we sincerely hope he will accept the suggestions of public policy made in these columns from week to week." 13

Recommendations were anything but meek. A typical headline read, "Why the World Is at War: Real Reasons at Last Exposed[—]Peace Crucified on the Cross of Commercialism." Each edition carried variations on what became a Thompson theme: "The commercial rivalry between Great Britain and Germany was not our fault; and we are not especially interested in their respective pretensions to power and predominance in old world affairs." The villains consisted of Democrats, Europe, and the *Tribune*, to be challenged by such heroes as Irish nationalists, war critics, and—towering above all—William Hale Thompson. "Mayor Thompson's Public Record Proves His Fidelity to the People," or so the headline read.¹⁴

The Republican fared considerably better than other critics of the war. In Schenck v. United States, the Supreme Court found a Socialist leaflet urging readers to recognize the "right to assert your opposition to the draft" in violation of the Espionage Act. Perhaps less offensive (or more patriotic) was The Republican's argument that draftees, as members of their respective state militias, "can not be lawfully required to participate in an overseas' war." 15

The Court again upheld the Espionage Act in *Abrams v. United States*. One of the pamphlets in question contended Woodrow Wilson's "shameful, cowardly silence about the intervention in Russia reveals the hypocrisy of the plutocratic gang in Washington and vicinity." *The Republican* echoed the charge in December 1918: "Why are our American soldiers now fighting in Siberia, if they are? When did we declare war on Russia? Whose war are we fighting there?" 16

The defendants in *Pierce* v. *United States* would have been entitled to doubt the impartiality of government prosecution. The Court affirmed Espionage Act convictions for the distribution of the Socialist pamphlet *The Price We Pay*, written by the Reverend Irwin St. John Tucker of Chicago. "For war is the price of your stupidity, you who have rejected Socialism!" was a sentiment best left unsaid, unprinted, and unmailed, at least for those who did not cloak it in the Americanism of George Washington's Farewell Address. *The Republican* took that precaution and, possibly as a consequence, avoided prosecution.¹⁷

A kind of routine developed during these months. Thompson and *The Republican* issued charges, the patriotic press reported on them, and the image of Thompson as war critic emerged. But appearances deceived. The federal government did not ignore or simply tolerate Thompson—he cooperated when needed. After the meeting of the People's Council, Thompson became one of the more notorious figures in America as his own city hanged him in effigy. Yet the Bureau of Investigation (BI) and Military Intelligence were more interested in reports prepared by Police Chief Herman Schuettler. A police surveillance detail had collected information on delegates.¹⁸

After the war Hinton G. Clabaugh, head of the Chicago office of the BI, praised Schuettler "for his competency and his very great assistance personally, [and] also his entire police department in helping make" surveillance work succeed. Clabaugh's office benefited from Chicago police work throughout the period. Officers attended rallies and meetings of suspect groups while police informants reported on the activities of Socialists and the Industrial Workers of the World. Publicly, Thompson looked to be the champion of free speech and assembly. Emma Goldman, William "Big Bill" Haywood, and Morris Hillquitt all appeared in Chicago during the war. But such visits did not keep the police from spying.¹⁹

They were joined by others, like the amateur spies who may have read the *Tribune* for clues on the whereabouts of the potentially disloyal. In February 1918, the paper printed the names and addresses of some fourteen thousand "enemy aliens" registered with the police. Anyone on the way to or from work could keep an eye on German neighbors. Advertising executive Albert M. Briggs wanted to do even more. Briggs authored a plan for a civilian surveillance group to complement government efforts. He gave it to Hinton Clabaugh, who forwarded the proposal to Washington in March 1917. BI Chief A. Bruce Bielaski approved on the condition that the group keep its activities "as confidential as practicable" and not alarm aliens that they would be mistreated.

Briggs was allowed to organize his American Protective League (APL), and by July 1917 he had nine hundred units operating nationwide. Briggs endowed his creation with an intricate framework of chiefs, captains, lieutenants, operatives, and squads to police the business, financial, and industrial sectors of the economy. The league preferred to have business and white-collar workers as officers, "trusted employees" (as Briggs called them) for operatives. The rank and file workers were not to know of the APL's existence; Briggs wanted them to forward information out of unquestioning patriotism.²⁰

The APL in Chicago enlisted over six thousand active members. It maintained an auto fleet for Justice Department personnel and performed various staff duties. From character and loyalty checks to enforcing the Fuel Administration's Lightless Night, the APL conducted over ninety-nine thousand investigations. There was work enough for a staff of sixty-six stenographers and clerks.

"Among the unassimilated rabble who make a certain portion of Chicago's polyglot politik-futter, there are perhaps more troublemakers than in any other city in America," wrote Emerson Hough in his 1919 history of the APL. Hough's rabble consisted of "religious and social fanatics, third-sex agitators, long-haired visionaries and work-haters from every race in the world." They were the kind of people to draw the attention of a surveillance group.²¹

The APL itself gained public attention with its Slacker Drive of July 1918. Agents raided and sealed off Cubs' Park to check the draft status of men attending a doubleheader against the Boston Braves; another raid targeted the Barnum and Bailey Circus at the White City Amusement Park on the city's South Side. Some two hundred thousand men were processed in the drive, with detainees kept at Municipal Pier. It was one of the few times the APL made news. "The press, throughout the period of the war, aided the League and the Bureau of Investigation in every possible way," Clabaugh wrote in December 1918.²²

Through it all, Thompson kept nearly as quiet as the newspapers. His one outburst followed the meeting of the People's Council. He complained of a "conspiracy against me [in which] my enemies have recently bored holes in the walls of my apartments, installed dictagraphs, tapped telephone wires, stationed operators in adjoining rooms and employed spies to hound me." According to Justice Department files, it was true.²³

Thompson kept a downtown suite at the LaSalle Hotel. By the time of a strategy session on September 4, 1917, someone had placed a listening device in the room and tapped the phone. A transcript of the meeting

showed that Thompson, Fred Lundin, and others discussed the upcoming Republican Senate primary campaign and the mayor's personal safety. Someone noted that Abraham Lincoln used a disguise to thwart attacks. Apparently, the subject of Lincoln's leadership in times of crisis was not addressed.²⁴

A memorandum attached to the transcript made no mention of a confrontation between Thompson and government authorities; neither did a cover letter by J. Edgar Hoover. If such action never occurred, Thompson acted throughout the war as though it might at any time. The day before he made his charges, the Justice Department raided IWW headquarters along with Big Bill Haywood's residence on Warren Avenue. Thompson easily could have linked the raid to the "conspiracy" against him.

It would have made a sensational story, a mayor who cooperated with federal officials only to be spied on himself. Any such talk, though, would have exposed him as a hypocrite. Instead, Thompson let the opportunity pass. He found it more rewarding to talk like an antiwar critic as he discreetly accommodated the federal government and the APL.²⁵

With Washington satisfied, Thompson found he could survive public backlash behind a shield of plans. Michael Faherty helped fashion that protection. Faherty was a Thompson favorite who served as chairman of the Board of Local Improvements, which handled such activities as street and sidewalk construction. Faherty worked hard to draw attention away from his friend and onto the promise of public works. He offered his first diversion in April 1917 with the suggestion the city build a subway financed by a special assessment on property owners.

Chicago's mass transit woes were such that the Kaiser could have been elected mayor upon completing a subway. Faherty understood that, and he regularly exploited the weakness of Chicagoans for public works propaganda. So the talk of Thompson's plans continued as a balance to talk about Thompson's politics. In October Faherty urged the city council to consider an elaborate, lower-level transportation system for downtown. Six months later, he began work on the Michigan Boulevard link.²⁶

Not even war could drive the Burnham Plan from the public's imagination. Proof came with the opening of the Twelfth Street project in December 1917. Ignoring a Lightless Thursday ban that darkened area streets, a crowd of ten thousand gathered for the dedication ceremony several blocks south of the Loop. Thompson hailed the project to improve traffic on one of the city's most heavily used streets. He claimed it was "beyond my comprehension how any citizen of Chicago interested in its advancement could advocate the policy of abandoning public works at this time." Thompson

avoided direct comment on the war. Instead, he talked of the economic uncertainties likely in its wake; public works would combat the problems facing postwar Chicago. The Michigan Boulevard link promised to do precisely that and more, with the extension of downtown north over the Chicago River into a backwater district of homes and businesses. People could not help but listen. No matter how exhilarating, Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry were exercises in destruction only. Chicagoans had been taught by Daniel Burnham to value matters of construction above all else.²⁷

In France, Robert McCormick was so taken by combat at Cantigny that he named his suburban estate after the battle. Back home his newspaper was equally moved by the need for the Michigan Avenue bridge. The *Tribune* did not want to imperil the war effort, "But until we have a negative decision it would seem to be the part of wisdom to go ahead." Charles Wacker of the Chicago Plan Commission agreed. As chairman, Wacker resembled the students who read his manual; he believed unquestioningly in the Burnham Plan. He saw the war not so much as a call to civic duty but as a roadblock to progress. "How are we to develop a strong, virile and capable people?" he asked in calling for a continuation of public works during wartime.²⁸

His answer could have come directly out of the civics text. "Our battle for humanity in the war zone," Wacker told an audience of Plan Commission members in November 1917, "should not overshadow the need for making ceaseless efforts at home to secure the HUMANITARIAN and ECONOMIC benefits to be afforded the Plan of Chicago." ²⁹

Wacker wanted the federal government to release scarce materials needed for the Michigan Boulevard project. For help he contacted Frederic A. Delano, a former Chicagoan and early supporter of the Burnham Plan who was serving on the Federal Reserve Board's Capital Issues Committee. Wacker argued in a letter that the bridge would not absorb "men, money or materials necessary for the successful prosecution of the war effort" and was instead an "essential part" of the link between Chicago, Fort Sheridan, and the Great Lakes Naval Training Base. Despite Wacker's efforts, the project was delayed by a materials-induced work slowdown. Still, the Plan endured through 1917 and 1918, and with it Chicago's mayor.³⁰

Thompson was putting great effort into a revised image. He had something old in the Burnham Plan to go with something entirely new—his support of organized labor. The General Assembly had passed a school reorganization act in April 1917; provisions called for teacher tenure and a new school board. A month later Thompson and Jacob Loeb split over board appointments. The Loeb Rule had become a liability.

"I am not opposed to the full and fair recognition of union labor in every possible situation in the board of education or any other agency of the city government," Thompson said in June. "In fact, I will go as far and accede to the just demands of labor as to any other element. Nor will I knowingly permit the enemies of labor to dominate the administration of the schools." Within two weeks, the board voted to restore forty-nine of the sixty-six teachers dropped the previous June. Loeb cast the sole dissenting vote, a move that underscored his new standing in *The Republican* as Judas.³¹

Thompson salvaged other parts of his old image. He offered his yacht for government service, signed an Anti-Saloon petition, and allowed Librarian of Congress Herbert L. Putnam to help screen candidates for the position of chief librarian in Chicago. These multiple appeals signaled another run for office, this time the U.S. Senate. The rumor first surfaced in July 1916; Thompson made it official fourteen months later. The idea was for him to be a respectable candidate in the image of Frank Lowden, until scandal and war intervened. In the new scenario, ethnicity and class substituted for respectability.

When he commented in April 1917 on the size of Chicago's German population, Thompson already was speaking to a statewide audience. Illinois had sizable pockets of German and Scandinavian voters who were skeptical about the Allied cause. The situation was like that in Wisconsin, where Robert La Follette could vote against a declaration of war because so many of his constituents, either as immigrants or Socialists, allowed it.³²

Success demanded that Thompson reprise his mayoral campaign—he had to make promises without getting caught in the contradictions. The Senate campaign was to be the second installment in the politics of forceful inconsistencies. *The Republican* accordingly ran stories on La Follette, reprinted the Farewell Address of George Washington, and urged readers to buy Liberty Bonds because "the American Army is entitled to our hearty and undivided support wherever it may be." The senate candidate also made a point of purchasing \$5,000 in Liberty Bonds through his fellow Masons.³³

Thompson could also point to his platform as proof of loyalty. He supported "peace with honor"; a foreign policy based on Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine; the rights of labor (including opposition to "the importation of Chinese labor"); and an excess war-profits tax. The Truth about William Hale Thompson, as one pamphlet was titled, even explained why Thompson temporarily blocked the sale of Liberty Bonds in city hall: He wanted to avoid so much as the appearance of

municipal workers being forced into contributions. Voters were offered a Thompson who was "an American with no foreign alliance of any kind," patriotic down to the Shriner's pin on his lapel.³⁴

But Thompson needed something more, maybe even a bit of James Curley, another politician who was unlikely to be mistaken for an Anglophile. When an English officer asked permission to recruit countrymen living in Boston, Curley replied, "Take every damn one of them." Like Thompson, Curley condemned a "war for commerce" and championed free speech, but he also understood the political climate of 1917–18. Others risked their careers—or their lives—by following the lead of Eugene Debs; Curley did not. And it was always possible that a Wilsonian peace would lead to a free Ireland. So Curley welcomed General Joffre and shared in the cheers of a half-million people. No such political calculation occurred in Chicago.³⁵

If Thompson expected a groundswell of support for his candidacy, there was none. The campaign recalled his attempt to rework the city council in 1916, when ambition outweighed the necessary groundwork for victory. Thompson controlled only one faction of the Chicago GOP; Edward Brundage and Charles Deneen—both as ambitious as Thompson and neither inclined to an antiwar stand—headed the others. They had to be placated or isolated; Thompson did neither. He also needed support from a powerful state Republican. Governor Frank Lowden was the obvious choice, but he was now an enemy.

Born in 1861 at Sunrise City, Minnesota Territory, Lowden possessed the frontier background Americans valued in their leaders as a sign of character. Marriage to the daughter of George Pullman gave him the wealth and social status to pursue his political ambitions. Just as Thompson had, Lowden caught the attention of William Lorimer, who first supported him for governor in 1904. Thompson himself urged Lowden to run in 1912 and four years later supported him against Democratic incumbent Edward Dunne.³⁶

Lowden consistently avoided the political shadows of others. To put literal and figurative distance between himself and Lorimer, he purchased a farm in downstate Illinois; the machine protégé made himself into the Squire of Sinissippi. Thompson cast yet another shadow. As mayor and political ally, he expected to share patronage from the West Parks and Lincoln Park Boards. (The General Assembly encouraged Chicago factional politics by having the governor appoint the members of both boards.) Lowden, however, was reluctant to offer jobs that could be used to advance his own career.

Thompson's antiwar talk provided the perfect excuse for a break, and the People's Council incident made it complete. The falling-out also cast Lowden as governor-patriot, a role valuable in repairing political damage caused by the race riot in East St. Louis. The July 1917 violence had left forty-seven dead and one hundred injured. Lowden did not want those figures turned against him in future elections.³⁷

Without prominent allies, Thompson tried to base his campaign on personal appeal. But the strategy could not withstand yet another school board controversy. Thompson had named his new school board in June 1917. A rebellious city council at first approved, then rescinded its vote; for the next two years, old and new boards fought in court for control of the schools. As a member of the old board, Max Loeb had avoided the controversy surrounding the board president. He did not become the second Loeb to trouble Thompson until August 1918.³⁸

Less than a month before the primary, Loeb issued a letter to fifty black community leaders on a most sensitive issue, school segregation. "Do you think it wiser to have separate classes for Colored and whites, with Colored and white teachers, in the same school rather than to have separate schools?" he asked. "It seems much wiser to have separation (if any at all is necessary) by voluntary action rather than through the operation of law." 39

Thompson was forced to disown the inquiry along with its author. He informed a delegation of black civic leaders led by the banker Jesse Binga and the publisher Robert S. Abbott that Loeb was working at the behest of the *Tribune*. As for the letter's subject, the Senate candidate predicted "there is no more danger of segregation in the schools than the kaiser to be president of the United States."

Yet Loeb revealed a situation that was becoming increasingly evident on the South Side—white parents did not like their children attending school with black children. Thompson found himself in the difficult position of sympathizing with blacks without doing anything that threatened his support among whites. Such a response was unlikely to satisfy either side, but he had no other option.⁴¹

Campaign problems such as this may not have shown so clearly from a distance. The war had made Thompson a kind of monster to the American public. Such creatures by definition had to frighten, and this one did so through words and in the possibility of winning the nomination. Theodore Roosevelt, for one, was concerned if not scared. "Thompson's nomination would be a disaster to the Republican Party," Roosevelt wrote Henry Cabot Lodge a week before the primary, "and the best Republicans

would support even that pink-bearded monkey [the red-headed Democratic incumbent J. Hamilton] Lewis, as against him." The former president need not have worried. Disaster would wait until the Depression.⁴²

A Thompson victory depended wholly on some circumstance, like a turn in the war. For reasons unrelated to Chicago politics, the German army wanted to comply; however, by the primary date of September 11, 1918, its final offensive was spent. Thompson was left to face an electorate finally aroused and enraged. By early September he abandoned campaign stops downstate. His appearances there had sparked name-calling, rock-throwing, and general patriotic intolerance.⁴³

Thompson was facing Congressman Medill McCormick in the primary. McCormick, the son-in-law of Mark Hanna, benefited from a variation on Hanna's 1896 front-porch strategy for William McKinley. In early 1917 McCormick attended a meeting at the Saddle and Cycle Club to plan a response to German propaganda efforts. The discussion evolved into the Four Minute Men program of the Committee on Public Information. By Armistice Day, the Illinois division consisted of two thousand speakers addressing seven hundred thousand people weekly.

Volunteers appeared in theaters, clubs, union halls, and churches to recite memorized four-minute speeches similar to the poem commemorating their work: "I am a doctor. I give four-minute treatments for disloyalty, un-Americanism, selfishness, laziness. I eradicate apathy and listlessness and instill 'pep' and enthusiasm." Speech topics suggested for the spring and summer months before the primary included "The Clash on American Ideals," "Mobilizing American Man Power," and "Where Did You Get Your Facts?" Four Minute Men in Aurora and Peoria did not need to wear McCormick pins or disparage Thompson in their talks. It would have been redundant.⁴⁴

Brother of the *Tribune*'s Robert McCormick, Medill received generous press coverage, including a *Tribune* review of Thompson's career. Readers were reminded, "Thompson Aid to Pacifists Shows Views" and "Mayor's Organ [*The Republican*] War Foe after We Join Allies"; the political cartoonist John T. McCutcheon drew work appropriate for the page-one stories. When McCormick told a rally at Cubs' Park that he opposed the "faint-hearted, the pacifists, the defeatists," and others who would transform the United States into another Russia, the *Tribune* both reported the remark and found the hyperbole to inflate it.⁴⁵

In another ten years, Thompson would be rendered guilty by association with Al Capone. He was assigned a different group of cohorts in 1918: "Thompsonism is simply running true to the form displayed in other

states—Bolshevism in Wisconsin, pacifism in Minnesota, peace-arkism in Michigan, Thompsonism in Illinois, all have sought to divert attention from their records by shrieking against 'war profiteers.'" An election-day editorial (as opposed to the above, which appeared as ostensible analysis of Thompson's record) informed voters, "The Western Front Is Here." 46

McCormick defeated Thompson by sixty thousand votes, enough for the *Tribune* to exclaim, "Disloyalty Answered." The assessment echoed across editorial pages in Chicago and nationwide. The *Daily News* boasted: "Illinois, the state of Lincoln and Grant, has no occasion to feel ashamed of the results obtained at Wednesday's direct primary election." In New York the *Times* called the defeats of Thompson and Georgia senator Thomas W. Hardwick "salutary discipline for malignants"; among the charges against Thompson were "insolence to Joffre," "abasement before the pro-German vote," and "coddling" of the People's Council. And in Memphis the *Commercial Appeal* took a distinctly Southern pleasure from the results: "Mr. McCormick comes from fine old Virginia stock which, transplanted to Illinois, has not deteriorated."⁴⁷

Yet for all their finality, the assessments of Thompson's political demise were more than a decade premature. His intuition had proven correct, regardless of the vote total. The Midwest was sympathetic to isolationism, provided the right candidate and conditions. Thompson simply was the wrong person at the wrong time. If nothing else, he learned that inconsistencies alone did not destroy a campaign. He had supported preparedness one year, opposed war the next, and tried to find a patriotic, isolationist middle ground the third as he used extreme rhetoric to attack critics along the way. There was a formula for continued success in that. And, whatever the state of his national ambitions, Thompson still had Chicago.

The *Daily News* suggested that possibility, with considerable distaste. "To Chicago there is some humiliation in the figures indicating that Mayor Thompson polled in the city a vote as large as the combined vote of his chief rivals, McCormick and [George E.] Foss." Thompson ran ahead of McCormick in the city by a vote of 71,000 to 53,000. "I deeply appreciate the vote of confidence given to my administration," the loser remarked in his election night statement, "as mayor of Chicago and to the principles which I presented to the people of the state in my candidacy."

Thompson did more than appreciate, he understood. After nearly a year and a half of constant invective (the *Tribune* coined such nicknames as the Big 'Un, Big Bill Blue, and Our Passive Patriot), he remained strong enough in Chicago to outpoll a popular, mainstream opponent. He had let go of an old image he found too constraining. Now he could revive the tax charge

against Victor Lawson and challenge Medill McCormick to support all the winning primary candidates. When he turned out to be the loser, Thompson simply had his newspaper decide the victorious McCormick was not a true Republican. Demagogues did not bother with the need for consistency.⁴⁸

The Thompson of 1915 thus evolved into the version of 1918 and beyond. A month after the senate primary, he nominated—unsuccessfully—John Fitzpatrick and Simon O'Donnell, respectively the presidents of the CFL and the Building Trades Council, for membership on the school board. Thompson now cultivated the support of organized labor, and he believed in Irish independence. When he told an audience of ten thousand in late 1918, "it is difficult to see why we should be indifferent to the situation in Ireland," Thompson knew he sounded every bit the Democrat. It was part of a new image.⁴⁹

And Thompson kept the most important element of the old. Following Armistice Day, Bernard Baruch announced the War Industries Board would ease its ban on public works construction. With that, the Burnham Plan quickly returned as page-one news. The *Tribune* focused on proposals such as the electrification of the Illinois Central Railroad with a terminal just south of downtown at Twelfth Street, development of a commercial harbor, and work on a lakefront parkway. "Paris has to go 12 miles up the Seine to get into such a playground," an editorial observed, "Berlin has to go 15 miles down the Spree; London has to go 40 miles up the Thames." Chicago could take advantage of its own front yard. 50

The Plan encouraged a sense of conviction that bordered on the religious. The connection was formalized on Nehemiah Day, Sunday, January 19, 1919. The Plan would rebuild Chicago as the biblical Nehemiah had Jerusalem. "The city is a challenge to our Christianity," preached the Reverend Thomas Fulton Campbell to the congregation at the Seventh Presbyterian Church. "Jesus was profoundly interested in Jerusalem, and he is interested in Chicago today. We want a beautiful Chicago, a clean Chicago, a safe Chicago and a good Chicago." It was a message repeated two hundred times across the city that day.⁵¹

Biblical metaphor served Thompson better than his challengers, who could only promise to build. Thompson knew that completed projects won more votes. So the Board of Local Improvements issued a quadrennial report with figures and tables detailing construction. Sidewalks, streets, and sewers: The report spoke to business leaders and homeowners and anyone else who remembered spring and autumn of long ago, the mud of Chicago or peasant village. To the end of his career, Thompson remained

a simple yet effective communicator in asphalt and concrete. He was Big Bill the Builder, a Nehemiah for the 1920s.⁵²

But there would be nothing easy about reelection. The war had left Chicago on edge. Armistice Day did little to exorcise the tensions and anxieties of the past year and a half. And celebration seemed inappropriate in the wake of so much death. Influenza struck shortly after the Senate primary, the epidemic spreading quickly through the Great Lakes Naval Base and Fort Sheridan. By the beginning of October, city health officials were preparing for its outbreak in Chicago.

Influenza coincided with the Fourth Liberty Loan Drive. The last wartime bond drive possessed a special importance, one the *Tribune* noted in the final days of the campaign: "Only 40 Hours Left to Redeem Chicago on Loan." At the same time authorities banned public dancing and restricted funeral attendance to next of kin, a Liberty Loan parade drew 100,000 people downtown. Joining civilians were the army, marines, and the 5,000-strong Great Lakes Naval Band. Another 5,000 sailors later volunteered to work downtown as bond salesmen. The bond drive succeeded, with redemption accompanied by the spread of disease. Over 8,500 Chicagoans died from influenza through April 1919.⁵³

The mayoral primaries followed the bond drive, epidemic, and peace celebration by a space of two months. Thompson officially declared for reelection in January 1919: "I have given Chicago an honest, economical business administration with constructive achievements." Hoping to disprove those inaccuracies were former alderman Charles Merriam and Judge Harry Olson. Merriam was the more accomplished politician of the two. Both as an alderman and as a mayoral candidate in 1911, he had a sense of what campaigning entailed. Something about 1919 suggested to Merriam there was a more potent appeal than reform. As the picture on a campaign pamphlet made clear, he was the returning army captain ready for a different kind of fight.⁵⁴

"Chicago's hope is its free men and women who are carrying on to victory," his campaign literature said, "this fight against the combine of political autocrats and kings of special interests, standing in the way of the better day for the men, women and children of our great city." The Merriam platform called for "the very best treatment to the returning soldiers," greater home-rule powers, and local control over public utilities. There was also the inevitable pledge of support for the Burnham Plan, "an admirable program which will require a long term for its execution, and for that reason [one that] should be begun quickly and carried ahead with great vigor." 55

Merriam dismissed fears that he and Judge Olson would split the respectable vote to give Thompson the nomination. In 1911 he had won a three-way primary contest against candidates sponsored by Mayor Fred Busse and Governor Charles Deneen. Merriam thought history would repeat; so did leading members of Chicago's social reform community. Jane Addams urged, "The election of Captain Charles E. Merriam as mayor of our city would make Chicago the pioneer in scientific administration of American cities—the first in the approaching period of municipal reconstruction." Other endorsements came from the social reformers Mary McDowell, Margaret Drier Robins, Amelia Sears, and Harriet Vittum. 56

Whereas some Progressive reformers treated cleanliness next to godliness, Merriam revered government service. He had taught political science at the University of Chicago for nineteen years and was a devoted student of city politics. Political science in the age of the Wisconsin Idea demanded as much. Merriam wanted politics to lead to the kind of government-university alliance Robert La Follette had forged as governor. That belief led to three terms in the city council (1909–11, 1913–17) and the Republican mayoral nomination in 1911. Merriam made an exceptional candidate, explained a pamphlet from 1911, in that "He does not have a platform because he is a candidate, he is a candidate because he has a platform." ⁵⁷

Merriam's campaign also possessed a less progressive side, the product of public and personal frustrations. It included his unsuccessful reelection bid to the city council in 1917. Five votes separated Merriam from victory over a Thompson-backed opponent. The war service that followed proved little more rewarding than Chicago politics.

Assigned to the Rome office of the Committee on Public Information, Merriam was in charge of offering a Liberty Bond poster view of America to Italians. He coaxed a sixty-stanza poem out of Gabriele D'Annunzio on Italian-American friendship and had army pilot Fiorello La Guardia barnstorm through the Italian countryside. Merriam enjoyed less success with an uncooperative Thomas Nelson Page, the American ambassador; the captain left Italy after a tour of only seven months. The return to Chicago did not particularly satisfy. An affair with an Italian countess brought Merriam home to a struggling marriage. 58

In addition Merriam was destined to repeat old mistakes. He had lost critical black support in 1911 because of a rumor that he belonged to a segregationist neighborhood improvement association. He now hoped to erase that memory with a Young Colored Men's Merriam for Mayor Club and a fresh denial of membership in the Hyde Park Improvement Protec-

tive Club. The effort to reach out, though, had definite limits. One Merriam supporter, the president of the Women's Church Federation of Chicago, warned of "the attempt of the notorious Oscar DePriest to return to the city council." Most black Chicagoans considered DePriest a hero, and few saw any connection between support for Thompson and disloyalty. 59

Merriam hoped to win votes by arguing otherwise: "The patriotic colored people, I am informed, are very largely supporting my candidacy." Although he wanted African-American votes, Merriam lacked the political sensitivity to win them away from Thompson. Speaking to a black audience in the Second Ward, Merriam recounted the story of his meeting an elderly black Chicagoan in Paris. "I said to Aunty that she was a long way from home," Merriam told listeners. "Aunty," who allegedly predicted Merriam would be the city's next mayor, also measured the distance between candidate and audience.⁶⁰

Merriam appeared with Thompson at a South Side Masonic temple in mid-February. Thompson spoke first—on the threat posed by food pirates—and left before he could experience an opponent's demagogy. Merriam began with an attempt to read the suicide note of Dr. Theodore Sachs. When the crowd shouted him down, he moved on to Thompson's war record: "William Hale Thompson has been a shirker in times of peace and a slacker in times of war." Merriam was sure that if Thompson's father could speak from his grave, "he would rebuke this un-American mayor." Two days later, the Merriam campaign announced what it hoped was a major endorsement. E. O. Hanson had come out in praise of Merriam's Americanism "in vivid contrast to the truckling pro-Germanism of the present executive."

Hanson was not a settlement house resident or fellow political scientist; his sole importance derived from Seattle mayor Ole Hanson, his brother. The elected Hanson's career and opinions mattered in Chicago because of the just-settled Seattle general strike. Invoking an Americanism made popular by the Red Scare, Ole Hanson had requested troops from nearby Camp Lewis; the strike ended within four days of their arrival. Merriam wanted to identify himself with this kind of hero, if only through a brother.⁶²

Merriam used Americanism and war imagery throughout the campaign. He told his Second Ward audience it was not the race of the candidate that mattered but the answer to the question, "Is he a good citizen, a loyal citizen and a 100 percent American right now?" Those in city hall, motivated by "the Hohenzollern cult of power," did not measure up, he told another group. Merriam predicted Thompsonism "will be destroyed because the aroused citizens of this great city are grimly resolved not to surrender

to the false cries of 'Kamerad, Kamerad' which Mr. Deneen [again supporting Olson] and Mr. Thompson utter in behalf of the autocracy of profiteers they [each] represent."⁶³

The appeals worked with at least one part of the electorate. The Soldiers and Sailors Vigilante Club endorsed Merriam because "We believe that Captain Merriam is free from any entangling alliances with bosses and political machines." The group also lent some "muscle" uncommon in reform campaigns. Members challenged Thompson workers downtown, disrupted a rally at the Woodlawn Masonic Temple, and worked the streets in trucks for their candidate. Vigilante Lieutenant L. M. Tharp advised veterans "to load their political rifles with a vote for Captain Merriam and shoot as straight as they did when they sent a German sniper to Hun heaven." 64

"There'll be a big surprise for Willie / The Kaiser's second cousin Bill," predicted a Merriam campaign song. "Tho he doesn't think we've got a chance / When the votes come in he will." The song (with music borrowed from "Long, Long Trail") proved inappropriate for election night: Thompson polled 124,000 votes to Olson's 84,000 and Merriam's 18,000. Chicago was a long way from reform.⁶⁵

The incumbent won on a platform of home rule, lower utility rates, and free speech, and he provided the necessary rhetorical flourishes, such as: "I shall sink personal and political considerations in seeking the good of the city service and shall give myself unreservedly henceforth, as heretofore, to the support of law, liberty and justice." Given the field of challengers, it was enough. Armistice Day had passed and with it the war as unifying experience. In the chill of a February voting booth, wartime inflation and postwar recession may have crystallized into undeniable realities. Perhaps Thompson had been right all along—it was a consideration for that majority of Republican voters, women as well as men, who renominated him.⁶⁶

Merriam's defeat signaled the beginning of a gradual change in Chicago politics. After three decades the optimism that made possible settlement houses and reform politics was exhausted. Merriam personified the shift from political involvement to detached observation. The scholar-politician gave way to the scholar only, whose *New Aspects of Politics* (1925) talked of the old friendship between politics and psychology. "Between the developing science of psychology and the newer politics," Merriam predicted, "the relationship is likely to become even more intimate in the future than in the past." With a fascination for theory and methodology over

issues, modern political science was coming of age. Its practitioners would no longer fight at Armageddon.⁶⁷

Writers in the first decades of the twentieth century were fascinated with the American city as it was. To Carl Sandburg or Theodore Drieser, inspiration was the product of any window with a view of the street. Reformers reacted differently; the present only fueled their dreams for the city's future. Although Chicago proved easier to describe than change, reformers drew on an extraordinary motivation to fight for their ideas. While Merriam lost regularly to the Thompsons, Coughlins, and Kennas, he forced a reform-machine synthesis. Chicago embraced new park and school programs as sure as it avoided civil service. And years later, Richard J. Daley found that the much-ridiculed Progressive tenet of efficiency helped make the trains run on time.⁶⁸

The Progressives could have counted even Thompson as one of their own, in a way; he appropriated that part of their message that the majority of voters would be most likely to notice. The ideal of expanded government had definite possibilities, especially in brick and mortar. The schools and the tuberculosis sanitarium were politicized, but they still taught and provided care. Planning entailed far more than bridges and viaducts, but Thompson ensured it never meant less. Urban progressives simply failed to see the difference between personal defeat and reform advance, no matter how incremental or personally unsatisfying. In the end they followed Jane Addams into retirement or Charles Merriam in his search for new answers. Either way, the choice was tinged with a profound sense of failure. The Progressives ultimately were betrayed by their very idealism. It kept them from appreciating the ironies of Chicago politics. 69

Under the leadership of University of Chicago sociologist Robert E. Park, the next generation of city scholars devoted itself to observation and publication. Two decades earlier, Frederic C. Howe had written of the city as the hope of democracy. To the Chicago School sociologist, it was something else again, an ecological maze of zones and ghettos peopled by peripatetic hobos, isolated socialites, and disoriented peasants.⁷⁰

"To the city, we are to look for a rebirth of democracy," Howe wrote in 1905, "a democracy that will possess the instincts of the past along with a belief in the power of co-operative effort to relieve the costs which city life entails." The Chicago School found Howe's kind of optimism moving—and outdated.⁷¹

The sociologist Harvey Zorbaugh was more concerned with the new "realities of life" in the city. Zorbaugh had studied at the University of Chi-

cago for three years in the 1920s. In his classic *The Gold Coast and the Slum* (1929), he offered a patronizing view of the "colorful role" reformers played in city life. Though their idealism was precious, their dreams were "hopeless while they remain[ed] unrelated to the realities of life." Zorbaugh's heroes were the "realtors, engineers of public utilities, city-planning and zoning commissions, students in universities and others interested in predicting the future of the city."⁷²

From the new vantage point, the sociology and political science departments at the University of Chicago offered much during the 1920s. Detachment from the political process allowed for detailed study of topics such as civil service and trade unionism in city government, the causes for nonvoting, and the use of social welfare agencies by precinct captains. (In 1927 an enterprising university student even used a stenographer to produce a verbatim copy of a Thompson stump speech; the transcript was for a paper on the mayoral election.) But for all the data collected and considered, the new urban critics did not stop Thompson or the growth of machine politics. Unlike the old Progressives, the new school appeared uncertain it should even try.⁷³

Voters faced their own dilemma in the spring of 1919: Which of the five candidates running should they support for mayor? There were Thompson, Democrat Robert Sweitzer, Independent Maclay Hoyne, Labor candidate John Fitzpatrick, and Socialist John Collins. The independent bids by Hoyne and Fitzpatrick showed more than political ego. They reflected the factional nature of Chicago government and the inability of Democrats to satisfy or discipline dissidents.⁷⁴

Maclay Hoyne controlled an elective office cum patronage base that protected him from party regulars; that was sufficient to encourage his ambitions. John Fitzpatrick ran for different reasons. Fitzpatrick was a leader so committed to the cause that even his wedding ring bore a union stamp. He gambled that by 1919 the nation's greatest manufacturing center had produced a class consciousness ready for political action.⁷⁵

Hoyne included Clarence Darrow and the suddenly famous E. O. Hanson on his executive committee. The campaign itself was an ugly mix of race, ethnicity, and Americanism. "Since his election as mayor, Thompson has never ceased playing to the Negro vote," Hoyne said. "He has appealed to their prejudices and to their resentment against their actual and fancied grievances." Hoyne also reissued the Dear Fatherland Letter of 1915 with the charge, "This is the sort of Appeal to Race Prejudice that is a Slur on American Citizenship." The comment was framed by the pictures of two campaign buttons; one read "Unser Wilhelm für Bürgermeister" and the

other "Unser Freund Sweitzer für Bürgermeister." Hoyne's Americanism did not prevent him from reworking the issue of Sweitzer's ancestry. ⁷⁶

Forty-eight hours before the election, the *Tribune* ran a story on German propaganda leaflets used against American troops in July and August 1918. Like Charles Merriam, the paper hoped to play on the emotions of wartime patriotism. According to the story, psychological warfare in the final months of World War I included excerpts of a Thompson speech praising "George Washington's principle that for our Government the best policy is to keep out of Europe's quarrels and jealousies."⁷⁷

However weak a patriot Thompson seemed, another set of charges showed the source of his political strength. The *Tribune* reported the administration had made 30,675 temporary job appointments in its first year; a civil service reform group put the number of temporary appointments for the Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium at over half the 772 positions available. The figures damned, but a previous Thompson.⁷⁸

The politician of 1919 had abandoned any pretense to simple good government, and he now plainly sought the advantages of patronage. Those complaining were the enemy. Thompson attacked Democrats (they continued to operate under the "baneful influences" of Grover Cleveland on the question of free trade), Julius Rosenwald (for supporting Sweitzer over his own party's candidate), and the press. "By voting for William Hale Thompson," a handbill announced, "you fight the commercialized newspapers who cheat the school children and lie to you." 79

The campaign did not need to make perfect sense, especially against a field of candidates likely to divide the Democratic vote. Thompson acted as though he believed what he said, and when necessary he responded to shifts in the public mood. In peace and war he had paved 441 miles of streets and 230 miles of sidewalks and installed 221 miles of sewers. He now moved to keep radicals off—and out of—those public works through use of a police bolshevik squad. In early March a bomb plot was uncovered, allegedly part of an attempt to create a Chicago soviet. Special police details had a way of reassuring people, whether they were federal authorities or ordinary voters.⁸⁰

Only seven months after his defeat to Medill McCormick, Thompson won a second term as mayor. He received 260,000 votes to Sweitzer's 238,000; the three other candidates totalled 191,000 votes. Sweitzer won a majority of the Polish, Lithuanian, Italian, and, surprisingly, German votes. For his part, Thompson captured enough Swedish, Jewish, and WASP support to go with his 78 percent of the black vote. The Democrats were still too young, too underregistered, and too unappealing

among African Americans to withstand the defections of reformers and labor.

Sweitzer again took the Polish Sixteenth and Italian Nineteenth Wards, just as Thompson again won in the more politically active, middle-class Seventh and Thirty-Third Wards. The 166,000 votes for Hoyne and Fitzpatrick delivered a message Democrats did not particularly want to hear: They would control city hall between 1915 and 1931 by accident only. The political chaos could not be ruled without the proper mix of coalitions and discipline. Anything less and there would always be a faction, led by a state's attorney or someone else, convinced of certain victory and scornful of compromise.⁸¹

Thompson did indeed owe his victory this time to black support; together, the Second and Third Wards gave him a margin over Sweitzer of better than 15,000 votes. African Americans forgave Thompson for the way he had handled *Birth of a Nation*, the dismissal of Dr. Roscoe Giles, and growing school segregation. The mayor had declared himself a friend, and in patronage matters he more or less acted it.

The *Defender* particularly enjoyed its role in his reelection. "Modesty prevents us from proclaiming that 'the World's Greatest Weekly' wields more political influence than all the Chicago dailies [opposed to Thompson] combined, but results are what count." Thompson's victory statement to black Chicago ran in the April 5 *Defender:* "I believe in the Declaration of Independence. I am for America and American citizens first, last and all the time, without any distinction of race, creed or color." The victor did not care to note obvious exceptions.⁸²

"The pro-Germans and pacifists have complained that they could not express their opinions on the war," Clarence Darrow wrote in the *Tribune* during the campaign. "Here is their chance, and that opinion will be expressed and the whole world will judge us by our vote." American cities also judged, and their opinions showed that Chicago myths already had supplanted realities. In New York, the *Times* repeated Thompson's public war record to conclude what "a bitter joke as a patriot Mr. Thompson was to be." That same analysis transformed Hoyne into a politician of "high reputation and popularity by his prosecution of grafters and crooks." Further south and west, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* drew its own lessons from the election. "It must take some time for Chicago to live down the infamy of this latest shame," the paper gloated. "In the meantime we hope that South-hating publication, the *Chicago Tribune*, will at least have common sense enough to realize that there is a fertile field for missionary work at home." It was suggested the *Tribune* address the "odium" of trea-

son so close to home. Until then, "any advice from it will be unwelcome to the section of the United States lying below the Mason and Dixon Line, which has demonstrated in every way possible that it is 100 percent American." For the South, boosterism of city and region constituted yet another skirmish in a continuing Civil War.⁸³

Chicagoans cared little for what the South thought. They had other concerns and interests, like the city's baseball revival. The White Sox won pennants in 1917 and 1919, the Cubs in 1918. The yachtsman could not help but grow interested in the national pastime; it was good politics as well as fun. During game five of the 1917 World Series at Comiskey Park, Thompson took out his billiken charm to bring luck. The White Sox responded with three runs in the bottom of the eighth inning to beat the New York Giants and win the World Series. In time, this kind of Chicago victory would become as rare as a Republican mayor.

The Cubs lost to Babe Ruth and Boston the next year, but the White Sox went into the 1919 series as a heavy favorite against Cincinnati. When seven Sox players chose instead to lose (and an eighth kept knowledge of that decision to himself), South Siders could only wish it weren't so. They would have to confront a sports scandal on top of that summer's race riot.⁸⁴

Notes

- 1. Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 20, 1916.
- 2. Memphis Commercial Appeal, Oct. 24, 1916. The Commercial Appeal and the Chicago Tribune gave Thompson favorable coverage on the saloon closings in October 1915. The Commercial Appeal said, "When they [the United Societies] indict Mayor Thompson for ordering saloons to be closed on Sunday, they indict about nine-tenths of the American people." Oct. 8, 1915.

The standard interpretation of Thompson for the period 1917–19 is in Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 149–71; John Bright, *Hizzoner Big Bill Thompson: An Idyll of Chicago* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1930), 103–69; and, most sympathetically, William H. Stuart, *The Twenty Incredible Years* (Chicago: M. A. Donahue, 1935), 36–73.

- 3. New York Times editorials, Oct. 21, 1915, Oct. 25, 1915.
- 4. New York Times, Apr. 29, 1917, May 2, 1917. Thompson argued it was the city council's duty to issue invitations; he also cited the city's Scandinavian and Polish populations as reasons not to act.
- 5. For the First Liberty Loan, see New York Times, May 29, 1917, May 30, 1917, June 16, 1917; for council proceedings, see New York Times, June 23, 1917, June 25, 1917; for Kinsolving's remark, see New York Times, June 25, 1917. Thomp-

son's Liberty Bond holdings were discovered after his death in March 1944 when the FBI conducted a search of his safety deposit box for stolen securities and bonds; it found none. FBI file 87–3286, Subject William Hale Thompson, Freedom of Information Act request.

- 6. New York Times, Aug. 8, 1917, Aug. 17, 1917; Chicago Board of Education, The Chicago Public School Spelling Book for Grades Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight (1914), 154.
- 7. For the People's Council, see *New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1917, Sept. 3, 1917; for libel suits, see *New York Times*, Sept. 7, 1917, Sept. 8, 1917. Arthur W. Thurner treats the People's Council in "The Mayor, the Governor, and the People's Council," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 46 (Summer 1973).
 - 8. Memphis Commercial Appeal editorial, May 1, 1917.
 - 9. Memphis Commercial Appeal editorials, Sept. 1, 1917, Sept. 7, 1917.
- 10. The story of the People's Council was covered in the Atlanta Constitution, Houston Chronicle and Herald, Indianapolis News, New York Times, and St. Paul Pioneer Press during the first week of September 1917. I wish to thank Elizabeth Erb for reading through the Houston papers. The Associated Press covered the People's Council and other Thompson stories during the war. On the AP's board was Victor Lawson of the Daily News. Royal J. Schmidt, "The Chicago Daily News and Illinois Politics, 1876–1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1957), 24.
- 11. For the story on possible prosecution, see *Chicago American*, Apr. 30, 1917, *Chicago Tribune*, May 1, 1917, and *New York Times*, May 1, 1917; Graham to Clyne, marked "personal," May 17, correspondence 9–5–390–1, Department of Justice Central Files, RG 60, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; report Fleming to Clyne, May 29, 1917, correspondence 9–5–390–2, Department of Justice Central Files; Fleming quoted in *Chicago American*, Apr. 30, 1917.
- 12. Food Shortage Warning by William Hale Thompson, Mayor of Chicago, April 26, 1917, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS).
- 13. The Republican, June 30, 1917; Chicago Tribune reports on The Republican, July 1, 1917, Aug. 5, 1917, Aug. 13, 1917, Aug. 17, 1917, Aug. 19, 1917, Aug. 25, 1917, Sept. 2, 1917, Sept. 16, 1917.
- 14. For the headline, see *The Republican*, Aug. 25, 1917; for Britain and Germany, see *The Republican*, June 30, 1917; for Thompson fidelity, see *The Republican*, May 18, 1918.
 - 15. Schenck v. United States, 249 U.S. 47 (1919).
- 16. Abrams v. United States, 250 U.S. 616 (1919); The Republican, July 21, 1917, Dec. 14, 1918.
- 17. Pierce v. United States, 252 U.S. 239 (1920); for the Farewell Address, see The Republican, July 28, 1917, Feb. 23, 1918.
- 18. For the effigy, see Chicago Tribune, Sept. 5, 1917; for the report of Sept. 14, 1917, on the People's Council, see Ralph Boehm, ed., U.S. Military Intelligence

Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917–1941 (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984), file series 10110–219, reel 4.

- 19. For Clabaugh, see Emerson Hough, *The Web* (Chicago: Reilly and Lee, 1919), 489; for police activity, see Boehm, *Military Intelligence*, file series 10110–129, 10110–179, and 10110–219, reels 3–4; for radical meetings, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 26, 1917, Mar. 25, 1918, May 7, 1918. Clabaugh specifically praised the police "in helping make the American Protective League a success in Chicago" (489). The informants worked with both the police and the BI.
- 20. For the list, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 7, 1918, Feb. 8, 1918, Feb. 9, 1918, Feb. 11–15, 1918, Feb. 19, 1918; for background on the APL, see Joan M. Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), 13–40; for Briggs's remark, see Jensen, 25.
- 21. For APL activities, see Hough, Web, chap. 1 (quote on 180). By war's end, there were "6,142 active members and over 7,000 members in the industrial division." The distinction between the two groups is unclear (182).
- 22. For the Slacker Drive, see ibid., appendix A, and *Chicago Tribune*, July 12–14, 1918; for the comment by Clabaugh on the press, see Hough, *Web*, 491. The raid had little effect on the Cubs, who swept both games of the doubleheader. Their park would not be renamed for William Wrigley until the 1920s.
- 23. "Statement by Mayor William Hale Thompson to the People of Chicago, September 6, 1917." Although I consulted this document in the Municipal Reference Library in Chicago City Hall, since the completion of my research the library's holdings have been divided between City Hall and the Harold Washington Public Library and half of the library at City Hall has been closed to the public. For all sources I consulted in the Municipal Reference Libray, I have not included repository information because it is impossible to determine where these items can currently be found. Transcript in file 9–19–1206, Department of Justice Central Files.
- 24. "Statement by Mayor William Hale Thompson to the People of Chicago"; transcript in file 9–19–1206, Department of Justice Central Files. The author of an attached memorandum dated May 3, 1921, noted that the "more inquiry I make into the matter [of Thompson] the more firm becomes my conviction that the files not only in this Department, but in other departments, have been tampered with." A detective agency apparently did the surveillance for the downtown law firm of Zimmerman, Garrett, and Rundall. There is no indication whether the parties were acting alone or at the request of the Justice Department.
- 25. Memorandum and cover letter in file 9–19–1206, Department of Justice Central Files; for IWW raids, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 6, 1917; for police involvement with APL surveillance activity, see Jensen, *Vigilance*, 58, 68.
 - 26. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 24, 1917, Oct. 11, 1917.
 - 27. Chicago Tribune, Dec. 21, 1917.
- 28. For McCormick in the war, see Gwen Morgan and Arthur Veysey, Poor Little Rich Boy (and How He Made Good) (Carpentersville, Ill.: Crossroads Com-

munications, 1985), 206-16, 233; Chicago Tribune editorial, Mar. 21, 1918; for Wacker's comments on strength and virility, see Chicago Tribune, Aug. 3, 1917.

- 29. Chicago Plan Commission, Proceedings of the Chicago Plan Commission, 917, CHS.
- 30. Copy of Wacker to Frederic A. Delano, May 6, 1918, Chicago Plan Commission, *Proceedings*, 953, 958.
- 31. For the Loeb-Thompson break, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 23, 1917, May 24, 1917; for the labor remark and teacher rehiring, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 1917, June 16, 1917, *The Republican*, June 9, 1917.
- 32. For the yacht, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 10, 1917; for the dry petition, see Chicago Tribune, Jan. 18, 1917; for the librarian, see Chicago Tribune, Jan. 19, 1918, Jan. 20, 1918, Mar. 7, 1918; for the Senate rumor, see Chicago Tribune, July 2, 1916; for the declaration, see Chicago Tribune, Sept. 26, 1917; for German and Scandinavian populations, see Robert P. Howard, Illinois: A History of the Prairie State (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 222–24. David P. Thelen covers Wisconsin in Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976).
- 33. For La Follette, see *The Republican*, Oct. 13, 1917, Mar. 16, 1918, Mar. 23, 1918; for the Farewell Address, see *The Republican*, July 28, 1917, Feb. 23, 1918; for the Liberty Bond editorial, see *The Republican*, Apr. 15, 1918; for Thompson's purchase of bonds, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1917.
- 34. For Thompson's platform, picture, and promise, see *The Truth about William Hale Thompson* (1918).
- 35. Jack Beatty, The Rascal King: The Life and Times of James Michael Curley, 1874–1958 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1992), 5, 200–203.
- 36. For biographical details, see William T. Hutchinson, Lowden of Illinois: The Life of Frank O. Lowden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 1:1-27; for Lorimer and Thompson's support, see Hutchinson, 1:110-29, 243, 263. Thompson advisor Fred Lundin invested with Lowden in a mail-order drug and soft drink company (263).
- 37. For the farm, see ibid., 1:71, 228; for patronage, see 308; for background on the park, see Charles E. Merriam, Spencer D. Parratt, and Albert Lepawsky, The Government of the Metropolitan Region of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 44–52; for riot injuries and fatalities, see Elliott Rudwick, Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964; reprint, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 50–53. The legislature created three park districts for Chicago in 1869, with the Lincoln Park Board and South Parks Board members to be appointed by the circuit court. Even when the governor was given appointment power over the Lincoln Park Board two years later, the system was inefficient and geared more toward the considerations of politics than public recreation.
- 38. For the controversy surrounding the board vote, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1917, June 23, 1917, June 24, 1917, and Herrick, *Chicago Schools*, 137–38.

The council probably reconsidered its vote on the school slate as an easy way to compound Thompson's political problems. Unwilling to confront him directly on his war utterances, the council struck through the schools. With Jacob Loeb already confirmed in May, the council guaranteed that whichever board won control after the court fight, Loeb would be on it. The two Loebs apparently were not related.

- 39. Loeb letter in Michael Wallace Homel, *Down from Equality: Black Chicagoans and the Public Schools*, 1920–1941 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 18.
 - 40. Ibid.
- 41. Chicago Defender, Aug. 17, 1918. Homel notes that the Chicago Tribune was the only major daily to pick up the story.
- 42. Roosevelt to Lodge, Sept. 4, 1918, Elton E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 8:1366-67.
- 43. For the campaign strategy, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1918; for down-state reactions, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 161-62.
- 44. Committee of the Four Minute Men of Chicago, The Four Minute Men of Chicago (1919), CHS; for activities, see ibid. and State Council of Defense of Illinois, Final Report of the State Council of Defense of Illinois, 1917–1918–1919 (published by the authority of the State of Illinois), 30–32; for the poem "The Part of the Four Minute Men" by Fred A. Wirth, see Committee of the Four Minute Men, Four Minute Men; for the speech topics for spring and summer 1918, see Four Minute Men Bulletin, May 27, 1918, July 29, 1918, Aug. 26, 1918, Council of Defense Papers, Illinois State Archives, Springfield.
 - 45. Chicago Tribune, Sept. 1-9, 1918.
- 46. For the rally at Cubs' Park and Thompsonism, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 7, 1918; for the Western Front editorial, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 11, 1918.

McCutcheon, a talented cartoonist and winner of a Pulitzer Prize for his work, was selective in whom he attacked. Supportive of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936, he evidently accepted an offer from the publisher Robert R. McCormick to go on vacation before the presidential election and allow co-worker Carey Orr to lampoon FDR; the three cartoons of his that appeared during the period were distinctly apolitical. Thompson offered no such dilemma. Copy of McCormick to McCutcheon, Oct. 23, 1936, John T. McCutcheon Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago. Robert McCormick and his cousin Joseph Patterson shared control of the *Chicago Tribune* until the end of World War I, when Patterson agreed to leave and establish the *New York Daily News*. Morgan and Veysey, *Poor Little Rich Boy*, 221–22.

47. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1919, 801. Editorials in Chicago Tribune, Sept. 12, 1918, Chicago Daily News, Sept. 13, 1918, New York Times, Sept. 13, 1918, and Memphis Commercial Appeal, Sept. 14, 1918.

- 48. Daily News editorial, Sept. 13, 1918; vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1919, 801–2; for Thompson's remark, see New York Times, Sept. 12, 1918; for epithets, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 27, 1917, May 8, 1917, Oct. 4, 1917; for the revived tax charge, see William Hale Thompson file, Victor Lawson Papers, Newberry Library; for the letter and consideration of McCormick's party loyalty, see The Republican, Jan. 26, 1918, Oct. 5, 1918, Oct. 19, 1918.
- 49. For labor appointments, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 29, 1918, Nov. 19, 1918; for the rally, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 16, 1918. Seeing another chance to assert its independence, the city council rejected the labor nominees to the board.
- 50. For Baruch's announcement, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1918; for Plan support, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1918, Dec. 14, 1918.
 - 51. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 20, 1919.
- 52. Board of Local Improvements, "Quadrennial Report of the Board of Local Improvements of the City of Chicago," 1919. My interpretation differs markedly from that of Jon C. Teaford, who sees urban history as overly concerned with politics and too ignorant of municipal efforts at modernization: "City engineers likewise [as with comptrollers] fail to win notice in most accounts of municipal rule. The vast waterworks and sewerage systems of metropolitan America were their handiwork and reflect their predilections and professional judgments." In a city like Chicago, however, it was the politician who decided which engineers to hire, what their department budget would be, and in what sections of the city their handiwork would go first. See "Finis for Tweed and Steffens: Rewriting the History of Urban Rule," *Reviews in American History* 10 (Dec. 1982): 137–38.
- 53. For influenza at military bases, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 20, 1918, Sept. 24, 1918; for its spread to Chicago, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct., various dates; for the bond drive, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1918, Oct. 17, 1918, Oct. 18, 1918, Oct. 20, 1918. The actual death figure was 8,568, with related pneumonia claiming thousands more. Figure calculated from Chicago Department of Health, *Department of Health Reports*, 1919–21.
- 54. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 15, 1919; Win with Merriam, Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.
 - 55. Win with Merriam.
- 56. Ibid. For the prediction of victory in the three-way race and endorsements, see Merriam Papers.
- 57. For Merriam's political background, see Barry D. Karl, Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 41, 61–83; quote on front of "Platform" pamphlet, Merriam Papers.
- 58. For Merriam's defeat, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 28, 1917, Mar. 3, 1917, and Karl, *Merriam*, 82; for Merriam in Rome and for his personal life, see Karl, 84-95.

- 59. For Merriam and blacks in 1911, see Charles Branham, "The Transformation of Black Political Leadership in Chicago, 1864–1942" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981), 82; flier for the Young Colored Men's Merriam for Mayor Club, Merriam Papers; for draft statement of membership denial, see Merriam Papers; for the remark by Mrs. George M. Mathes on DePriest, see Win with Merriam.
- 60. For the undated "patriotic colored people" statement, see Merriam Papers; for the Aunty remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1919.
- 61. For the debate, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 12, 1919; for Hanson's endorsement, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 14, 1919; for the remark about E. O. Hanson, see undated press release, Merriam Papers.
- 62. For Ole Hanson, see Robert K. Murray, Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919–1920 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955; reprint, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 61–65.
- 63. For Merriam on Americanism, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1919, Feb. 19, 1919; for the linkage of Deneen and Thompson, see *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 24, 1919.
- 64. For the vigilante endorsement, see Merriam Papers; for activities, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1919, Feb. 19, 1919, Feb. 20, 1919, Feb. 25, 1919, and *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 21, 1919; for Tharp's comment, see *Chicago Journal*, Feb. 20, 1919.
- 65. For the campaign song, see Merriam Papers; vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1920, 846.
- 66. For Thompson's platform, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 20, 1919; for rhetoric, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 13, 1919. Gender breakdown of vote from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1920: Thompson, 81,783 men and 42,411 women; Olson, 52,603 and 31,651; Merriam, 10,297 and 7,393 (846).
 - 67. Merriam, New Aspects, 66.
- 68. For the settlement house programs of Jane Addams, see Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), esp. chaps. 5 and 9. Alexander B. Callow Jr. discusses the middle-class mentality that made reform so difficult in the second half of the nineteenth century in The Tweed Ring (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- 69. For Addams's gradual retirement, see Davis, *Heroine*, chap. 14. Arthur Link follows the Progressives into the 1920s in "Splintered but Alive in the 1920s," in *The Progressive Era*, ed. Arthur Mann (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975).
- 70. For background on the Chicago School, see Fred H. Matthews, Quest for an Urban Sociology: Robert E. Park and the Chicago School (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1977), and Winifred Raushenbush, Robert E. Park: Biography of a Sociologist (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979). The works referred to here are Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie's The City (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Louis Wirth's The Ghetto

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Harvey Warren Zorbaugh's *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), and Nels Anderson's *Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

- 71. Frederic C. Howe, *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 7.
 - 72. Zorbaugh, Gold Coast, 269-70.
- 73. The works referred to here are James W. Errant's "Trade Unionism in the Civil Service of Chicago, 1895–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939); Charles E. Merriam and Harold F. Gosnell's Non-Voting: Causes and Methods of Control (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924); and research by Sonya Forthal (filed in Harold F. Gosnell Material, Merriam Papers) that probably evolved into Cogwheels of Democracy: A Study of the Precinct Captain (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972). The stenographic copy of Thompson's speech is in the Merriam Papers.
- 74. Steven Erie argues that Irish Democrats were reluctant to embrace organized labor for fear of alienating conservative middle-class and business support. Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 50.
- 75. John Howard Keiser, "John Fitzpatrick and Progressive Unionism, 1915–1925" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1965), 5.
- 76. For the executive committee, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 11, 1919; for the race charge, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 6, 1919; for the Dear Fatherland letter, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 24, 1919, and Prints and Photographs Collection (Graphics), CHS; for Sweitzer's parents, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 23, 1919, Mar. 24, 1919.
 - 77. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 30, 1919.
 - 78. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 23, 1919.
- 79. For Thompson's charges, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 21, 1919, Mar. 26, 1919; for the attack on the press, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 12, 1919.
- 80. Public works figures compiled from Board of Local Improvements, "Quadrennial Report"; for the bomb plot and police bolshevik squad, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 4–8, 1919.
- 81. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest hundred from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1920, 847–48; for the ethnic vote breakdown, see John M. Allswang, A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890–1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), table 3:1, 42. Since Allswang measured only the Democratic vote in a two-party election, it is possible Thompson did not receive a majority of the Jewish, Swedish, and WASP votes. Some 16,400 people voted in the two ethnic wards while nearly 32,000 voted in the middle-class Seventh. Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1920, 848.
- 82. Vote totals for the two largely black wards rounded off to the nearest hundred from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1920, 847; for victory statements, see *Chicago Defender*, Apr. 5, 1919.

- 83. For Darrow's guest column, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 23, 1919; for editorials, see *New York Times* and *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, Apr. 3, 1919.
- 84. For the 1917 series, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 14, 1918; 1918 series summarized in Joseph L. Reichler, ed., *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (New York: Mac-Millan, 1985), 2597.

4

More Images: Race, Place, and Politics

Back around the corner at six o'clock, Studs and Red talked of how they would get a bigger gang together after supper, and go north of Garfield Boulevard until they found niggers. They described what they would do to them.

-James T. Farrell, The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan

IN RETROSPECT, there were obvious signs of racial discord throughout the spring and summer of 1919. Five days after Thompson's election, a bomb went off at a South Side building recently bought and occupied by blacks. In late April, fifty police officers patrolled the area around Forty-second and Vincennes to prevent the spread of racial incidents. Still, the problems continued.¹

Violence was compounded by an ignorance that extended beyond working-class whites. In May the *Tribune* investigated what a headline called "Chicago's Negro Problem." One installment in the series explained "Flat Building Held [as] Cure for Negro Problem." According to the *Tribune* reporter (identified as Eye Witness), black Chicago was "only two-thirds occupied—sometimes less."²

Middle-class blacks who risked violence in search of adequate housing knew better. But the misconception prevailed among whites. "Give the Negroes a place to go," the realtor L. M. Smith informed a meeting of the Kenwood and Hyde Park Property Owners' Protective Association, "and they will segregate and do so willingly." ³

Thompson did not respond to Smith's comment; the man who would become known as the Second Lincoln was performing at a rodeo in Aurora. For all his standing in the black community, Thompson showed little understanding of the conditions African Americans faced in Chicago. Anyway, it was only the appearance of concern that mattered to him. Publicity and the manipulation of issues came first, the predicament of a constituent group later, if at all.⁴

The riot also surprised the BI and Military Intelligence (MI). Both agencies had continued operations after the war, though the quality of their work suffered from personal and ideological prejudices. If the "facts" did not relate directly to German propaganda or Bolshevik-inspired agitation, they did not count for much. When investigators read the *Chicago Defender*, they ignored the real for the imagined, evidence of social strife for disloyalty.

The *Defender* was founded in 1905 by Robert S. Abbott, a Georgian educated at Hampton Institute. Abbott moved to Chicago in 1897 and earned a law degree before turning to journalism. Although as a black man he was acutely aware of prejudice, he fell under the spell of the city's aggressive, if bigoted, daily press.

Abbott borrowed his slogan from the *Tribune*: The World's Greatest Newspaper was reworked into the World's Greatest Weekly. Abbott patterned the *Defender*'s masthead after the Hearst papers, using an eagle with outstretched wings similar to those on the *Chicago Herald-Examiner* and *Chicago Evening American*. Not flattered by imitation, the Hearst chain sued. The suit was dropped when Abbott found another value-laden symbol, a sphinx. Abbott also borrowed the *Tribune* habit of identifying criminal suspects by race. However, "White Man Rapes Girl" and "White Judge Kills Chauffeur" were headlines intended for a different readership.⁵

While Chicago's daily papers provided Abbott with a journalistic formula, its railroad network gave him a national distribution system. Any train headed South had a ready circulation team on board in its black porters and waiters. This ad hoc arrangement worked so well that by 1917 Southern cities were trying to restrict distribution.

The white South simply did not like Abbott's message. "If you can freeze to death in the North and be free," asked a page-one story in February 1917, "why freeze to death in the South and be a slave, where your mother, sister and daughter are raped and burned at the stake, where your father, brother and son are treated with contempt and hung to a pole, riddled with bullets[?]" The paper had already come to the attention of the New Orleans office of the BI. "It appears to me that the articles in the *Chicago Defender* tend to incite," reported one agent who recommended an investigation in October 1916.6

War allowed prejudice to be recast as patriotism. A BI agent met in April

1916 with the executive board of New Orleans's American Protective League and Mayor Martin Behrman. According to the agent's report, Behrman thought the *Defender* was seditious, and members of the New Orleans APL telegrammed Louisiana's senators to stop its circulation in the South.

Reports critical of the paper were filed regularly. "The negroes here have been getting along peaceably and have been prosperous," indicated BI agent E. J. Kerwin at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, to Chief A. Bruce Bielaski in Washington. "Their condition is such that they are willing and are following the white man in whatever he says [to] do or [what] is right since the declaration of war." Kerwin worried that the *Defender* "will counteract all the good that speakers of the white race may try to do in behalf of" the war effort. The BI office in Tucson, Arizona, thought a *Defender* lynching story could be a piece of German propaganda. In April 1917, the Jacksonville, Florida, office warned that German agents might use the paper to foster unrest.

The warning was repeated by the APL in Mobile, Alabama: "Anyone who knows negro characteristics knows how difficult it is to secure reliable information from ordinary darkey [sic] regarding propaganda." At fault was the *Defender* of September 7, 1918, which included the editorial "Jim Crowism Must Go."

White Southerners were convinced that virtually every problem or inconvenience they encountered was traceable to the *Defender*. Durand Whipple of the Arkansas State Council of Defense wrote APL founder Albert Briggs: "It is more than a coincidence that in many homes in this city [of Little Rock] where the household servants have hitherto been well-behaved, we have been finding copies of the *Chicago Defender*."

While the postmaster of Belcher, Louisiana, believed "Every copy of this paper contains a lible [sic] on the South," Postmaster General Albert Burleson chose to warn rather than prosecute. The post office solicitor wrote the Defender in June 1918 that he did not doubt the paper's loyalty. He then added that an editorial such as that of June 8 (probably on a racially motivated bombing in Chicago), could be dangerous: "Nothing would be more pleasing to the Imperial German government than to have a matter of this character appear in the newspapers of America."

Burleson also knew when to soothe. Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi complained to the Postmaster General that the *Defender* was a "negro paper with a tissue of lies all intended to create race disturbances and trouble." Burleson assured Williams the department's solicitor "is

receiving copies of the paper regularly and is having them closely watched."9

Senator Morris Sheppard, a fellow Texan, asked Burleson in July 1919 to have the *Defender* "looked into with the view of seeing if the publication referred to should not be denied the right to use the mails." By this time the MI already had interviewed Abbott and sent its report to Washington along with a complete subscription list. The Chicago office thus knew who subscribed to the *Defender* in Medicine Hat, Alberta, and overseas; to the possible surprise of many, no one subscribed in Germany or Russia. But accurate information on Chicago's racial climate was another matter entirely.¹⁰

In part the MI was more concerned with labor unrest, which surfaced throughout the summer of 1919. Strikes, lockouts, and rumors had kept the office of Major Thomas Crockett occupied for the first eight months of peacetime. An estimated 250,000 workers were involved in labor disputes on the eve of the July 27 riot. Even city hall itself was affected. By late June, over 5,000 laborers and nearly 1,000 clerks had walked off their jobs; the rank and file in the police and fire departments considered doing the same. For those investigating the spread of radicalism, the labor situation confirmed suspicions.¹¹

By its nature, a riot—particularly one lasting four days and causing thirty-eight deaths—is exceptional, and the "obvious" may not provide the necessary answers. Even had they paid closer attention to Chicago's racial problems, Thompson and federal authorities would have missed the exceptional. Indeed, while the clash between races over employment, housing, and public facilities all served as a backdrop to the violence, they were not necessarily the chief causes.¹²

The Great Migration was attracting Southern blacks to Northern cities, where national and world events helped shape a New Negro consciousness. Yet black Chicagoans were not alone in experiencing that emotional and intellectual change. So did the city's ethnic groups, who felt an unprecedented awareness of European nationalism. Marcus Garvey stirred the imagination of one group of urban newcomers and Thomas Masaryk another. The Czech nationalist visited Chicago in May 1918 to the cheers of two hundred thousand well-wishers.¹³

Ethnicity provided a kind of antidote to poverty and prejudice in Chicago. Ethnic identity fostered dreams of a return to the old country as it provided the basis for establishing communities in a new one. Chicago was not Ireland, but there were sections that could have been. Streets named

Emerald and Parnell, a bit of a brogue in pew or pulpit at St. Patrick's: The Old Sod endured. And if Chicago was not Italy or Sweden, Poland or Ukraine, there were neighborhoods that came close enough.¹⁴

War had made clear that the map of Europe would be redrawn. As the promise of independence eventually yielded to the reality, anticipating events an ocean away proved close to impossible. A group of Poles and Lithuanians discovered this in May 1918. They had come to the parish hall at St. Adalbert's in the Pilsen neighborhood to discuss the future of their neighboring homelands, but participants could not agree on anything, from the playing of national anthems to reasons for the meeting's failure. Either "Lithuanian Bolsheviks" or "Polish sympathizers" were to blame. It all depended on ethnic perspective—and the ethnic newspaper read. 15

Disagreement was not confined to meeting halls. Throughout June 1919, Jews charged that Poles were harassing them in Douglas Park; previously, the two groups had divided the West Side facility by informal arrangement. On June 8 some 8,000 residents of the Jewish West Side gathered at Twelfth Street and Kedzie to fend off an expected invasion of the park by 5,000 Poles. Police took the rumor seriously enough to station an extra 250 officers around the park. A delegation of Jewish peddlers later met with Police Chief John J. Garrity to ask for better protection. Even with the arraignment of 42 youths for attacks in Douglas Park, Jews feared the streets had taken on an unexpected medieval character. 16

Jewish-Polish friction spread to the Southeast Side when a reported 3,000 Poles filled the streets around Eighty-fourth and Buffalo during the threeday Fourth of July weekend. This time Jews were the subject of rumor—that a Jewish grocer had killed a Polish boy for his blood. Claiming the story as an exclusive, the *Jewish Daily Courier* followed up with a report on the convictions and fines received by 18 rioters. While it had hoped for stiffer penalties, the *Courier* was satisfied: "At any rate the verdict will still be something of a lesson to the pogromists of South Chicago." The comment appeared in print the first day of the riot.¹⁷

While Europe pressed itself on Chicago repeatedly that spring and summer, Edward Dunne sought to reverse the process. In April the former mayor and governor left for the Paris Peace Conference as part of a delegation from Irish-American social organizations. Following a Paris meeting between delegate Frank Walsh and Woodrow Wilson, the group traveled to Ireland on a fact-finding mission. The Irish "will be content with nothing less than a republic," Dunne later warned. After an absence of nearly three months, he returned to the United States in early July.¹⁸

Dunne conferred with Eamon De Valera in New York. The two then left

together for Chicago, where the Irish nationalist scheduled three days of rallies and meetings. Exactly two weeks before the riot, De Valera addressed a crowd of 25,000 at Cubs' Park. The George Washington of Ireland worked the audience with a touch of Gaelic and a measure of rhetorical fire. "England tells you, 'Hands off Ireland.' The British lion growls immediately when anybody is likely to disturb its prey," De Valera charged. He appealed to "America's sense of honesty and sense of fair play and justice when I ask it not to take away from us the only weapon by which any nation has won its freedom in the past. That weapon seldom has been its own power from within. We are ready to use every man and every adult in the effort . . . to get the Englishmen out." De Valera may not have made clear to a crowd that cheered his very introduction for a half-hour that he meant the weapon of public opinion.¹⁹

De Valera's audience inhabited an urban environment where race was not the sole complication in their lives. Class and ethnic conflict had contributed to the city's violence for decades. When Mayor Levi Boone increased saloon license fees by 600 percent in 1855, he in essence challenged the city's Germans and Irish to respond; they did, and the resulting Lager Beer Riots left one dead. In 1877 socialists led a series of protests against the unsettled local and national economies. Mayor Monroe Heath, a transplanted New Englander, issued a call for volunteers to confront "the ragged Commune wretches." Eighteen people died in the fighting between protestors and police.²⁰

The Haymarket Square riot occurred nine years later. In its aftermath was a sense that disturbingly foreign men and concepts were on trial. "The anarchist idea is un-American," said Terrence Powderly of the Knights of Labor, "and [it] has no business in this country." After the German-born governor John Peter Altgeld pardoned the three surviving Haymarket defendants (of the original eight, six were immigrants), the Washington Post called the Illinois governor "an alien himself" with "little or no stake in the problem of American social evolution." 21

There was also tension between New Immigrant groups. During the garment workers' strike of 1915, picketers taunted police with a nickname, Cossacks. The name implied as much Old World memory as it did objective class consciousness. On the other side, police were confident they were standing up to foreigners—Jews, Italians, Bohemians, and Poles. The need to confront and subordinate could as likely have come from those other distinctly Chicago Irish organizations, the Democratic party and the Catholic church.

World War I had encouraged an ironic consensus among Chicagoans as

groups focused on a common enemy. German Chicago survived that patriotic prejudice and suspicion only to find a postwar world in which family and friends in the old country faced starvation from a continuing British naval blockade. In other Chicago immigrant communities, peace brought uncertainty in the form of the Versailles Conference as grand lottery: The lucky won homelands, the rest hoped for affiliation with dominant nationalities not overtly antagonistic. Among the losers in this vicarious game of chance were Chicago's Jews and Irish.²²

De Valera's visit fueled long-building emotions. How did a Chicago Irishman make the old country free when he could not even speak the old language? It was a question to preoccupy fathers, possibly to the point sons were left to their social athletic clubs. Parental oversight ordinarily was supposed to curb the excesses of a Ragen's Colts or Lorraine Club, both later identified as riot participants. However, that July there were distractions which made parenting difficult at best.

The strains of 1917–19 on ethnic Chicago led to a riot. Ultimately however, the ties of race, class, and immigrant status bound Jew to Pole to Irishman to German. When Eugene Williams drifted over into the "whitesonly" water off the beach at Twenty-sixth Street, he was more than an unfortunate target of a stone thrower. Williams provided an emotional release that ordinary violence—on the picket line, at the park, or in the alley—for once could not. And those who took to the streets were joined by others who simply sat at the kitchen table to read about the riot in the papers. Each day's stories allowed for the triumph of imaginary heroes over villains on the South Side, in Dublin, or across Eastern Europe.²³

Williams's drowning that Sunday afternoon quickly escalated into violence. A white police officer on the scene refused to detain a man witnesses had identified as the attacker; the situation deteriorated when the officer arrested a black man upon complaint by a white person. Rumors soon spread through black and white neighborhoods: Blacks had attacked a white swimmer who drowned, the white policeman prevented help from reaching Williams and even drew his gun on the black crowd. People enraged by wildly conflicting stories converged on the beach, gunfire erupted, and the riot began. It would not end until troops were called out late Wednesday night.²⁴

Much of the rioting occurred in and around the "Black Belt," which stretched south from Twelfth to Fifty-seventh Streets, ranging a few blocks east and west of State Street. This was where most of Chicago's African Americans lived, oftentimes adjacent to hostile white communities. Proximity guaranteed violence, as when whites drove in to shoot at blacks. The residents fired back.

The riot unfolded at different places and times; that unpredictability made it impossible for police to maintain order. A white mob hunted for blacks downtown; other rioters hoped to find black workers as they left the Stock Yards. But such attacks did not mean blacks served as passive victims. Rather, they fought back, just as some rioters sought white victims. Chicago, so long the newcomer's Canaan, had become Gehenna.²⁵

Five days after the violence began, a group of prominent Chicagoans met at the Union League Club to discuss the riot and consider ways to prevent a recurrence. The participants drafted a letter to the governor asking him to form a state committee that would "study the psychological, social and economic causes" and make recommendations for greater racial harmony. Lowden responded by appointing the Commission on Race Relations.²⁶

Members included such community figures as Robert Abbott, Victor Lawson, and Julius Rosenwald. The commission viewed the riot as a study in black and white only; racial violence had to be the direct cause of racial friction. Evidence was then fitted around the assumption. The commission reported in 1921 that the riot was fueled by the antagonism resulting from competition between the races over public facilities, employment, and housing. The historian William M. Tuttle Jr. later studied the riot and expanded the focus to include such factors as politics and the New Negro consciousness. Tuttle believed that the riot's origins lay in the "gut-level animosities between black and white people who were generally inarticulate and presentist-oriented, and who did not record their motivations or feelings for posterity." The emphasis remained on race.²⁷

That perspective led the commission and Tuttle to consider an incident immediately following the riot only to dismiss it for lack of a racial component. A series of fires in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on August 2 left close to a thousand people homeless. Those burned out of their homes were mostly Polish and Lithuanian. There was little evidence to suggest blacks were responsible, and no one was prosecuted.

The consensus was that agents provacateurs may have used arson to try to excite more violence; among those suspected were the Industrial Workers of the World and the social athletic clubs, some of whose members had participated in the riots. There is another possibility, that one or both of the ethnic groups set the fires. Emotions that disrupted the meeting at St. Adalbert's in the spring may have found another outlet by summer. The riot offered perfect cover for anyone intent on revenge, even if the victim

had the same skin color and worshipped at a neighboring parish. Such was the power of ethnicity in Chicago.

A meatpacking official told the race commission that, although he had not seen it himself, "he understood there was as much friction between Poles and Lithuanians who worked together in the Yards as between the Negroes and whites." Here was real "gut-level" animosity, but not the kind to fit research assumptions. The interplay of ethnicity and race simply could not be allowed to help explain the riot.²⁸

None of the riot's presumed causes had disappeared by June 1920, when another racial incident touched the city. If anything, the postwar recession only worsened black-white competition over jobs and housing. Indeed, friction between ethnic and racial groups marked the endemic rather than the exceptional in the American city; far rarer was the absence of competition and competitors deemed offensive by skin color or ethnicity. If race and employment were major causes, a riot could have taken place anytime after 1904, when meatpackers first decided to employ large numbers of blacks. If contested housing sparked the riot, violence could have followed the first residential bombing in July 1917 or any of the fifty-seven subsequent ones through February 1921.

With the memory of the riot not yet a year old, a group of black nationalists rallied in the Black Belt neighborhood of Thirty-fifth and Michigan. Calling themselves the Star Order of Ethiopia and Ethiopian Missionaries to Abyssinia, the group at one point burned an American flag. The events led to gunfire that left two dead, including a white sailor who had tried to intervene. This time, however, there was no riot. The British blockade, the Versailles Peace Conference, and the Chicago outpouring for Eamon De Valera were history. So was the major impetus behind the race riot of 1919.²⁹

The riot showed the extent that Thompson had transformed Chicago into metaphor. Any incident occurring in that onetime hotbed of disloyal-ty encouraged national coverage and comment. "It need not be said that the worst enemies of the negro race are those who may have excited them to stir up a dormant feeling which can not result in anything but injury to them," the *New York Times* said. "What did the Germans or the Bolsheviki ever care about the final situation of their dupes?" A second lesson, at least for those who took the Sunday *Times* as their primer, was that "Exploitation of the negro in Chicago by politicians is regarded by many as the chief underlying cause of the race riots in that city."³⁰

The Times based its opinion on at least one local source: "State['s] Attorney Maclay Hoyne of Chicago a few days ago laid the blame for the

race riots at the door of the politicians, who, he said, taught the negroes disrespect for the law." Hoyne was not criticized for the timing of his remarks (made in the first full day of rioting) or his race-baiting in the spring election. What counted was the lesson Chicago offered: Big Bill Thompson meant bad government, which translated into disloyalty during wartime and race riots afterward. The *Times* and its publisher, Adolph Ochs, did not want Tammany to bring the same to Manhattan.³¹

The South was not New York in climate, politics, or interpretation of the Chicago riot. The Atlanta Constitution and the Memphis Commercial Appeal quoted Hoyne as vindication that segregation worked while the Houston Chronicle wondered mockingly: "One waits with breathless expectation for the Tribune to explain." In Houston it was "inconceivable that Chicago contemplates putting the negro in his place," more so "that Chicago could imagine the negro ever getting out of his place." The Tribune editorial of July 31 ("What Are We Going to Do about It?") made the Chronicle's front page three days later. Southern readers presumably had an appetite for Northern journalism that began: "Chicago is disgraced and dishonored." 32

The Atlanta Constitution was more conciliatory, in keeping with its role as gateway of the New South. The Constitution contrasted the riots in Chicago and Washington, D.C., with instances of interracial cooperation in Virginia, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

And so it goes. Everywhere throughout the South there are repeated manifestations of the spirit of tolerance and cooperation and mutual self-help, and a striking absence of racial discord and friction.

And during these troubled times, when in the North and the East—where the negro is out of his natural habitat, removed from his natural environment and not understood—black people and white people are fighting and killing each other in race riots, it is fitting and altogether appropriate that we here in the South, where the white people know and understand the negroes, and vice versa, should not only suggest, but, by example, lead the way—the only just and effective way—toward harmony and good-will among the races.

Racial progress Southern-style assessed a cost the Constitution did not mention. By year's end, twenty-one blacks would discover the people of Georgia wanted them for a different example, the kind set by lynching.³³

Memphis lacked Atlanta's geographical and emotional distance from Chicago to engage in simple condescension. The difficulties of a competitor, especially a Northern one, begged for extended comment. "The race problem is national," the *Commercial Appeal* declared in an editorial.

"Chicago, Washington and New York will better understand it if they get the viewpoint of the South, which is based on no insane prejudice, but on an experience running through half a century." As troops sought to restore order on Chicago's South Side, Memphis distinguished between Northern and Southern mob action: "Mobs in the South vent their revenge only upon the negro who has been guilty of some foul crime. The innocent seldom if ever suffer." 34

A reprint of the Tribune's July 31 editorial offered the pretext for yet more Southern observations and solutions. Reconstruction demonstrated the folly of social equality and integration; the South allowed blacks to establish "their own community lives"; and Memphis had made only one mistake in the matter of race relations over the past decade, "an effort about eight years ago to bring the negroes back into politics," the "misguided action" of some white politicians. To prevent further rioting in the North, "The thoughtful people of the North must now know that lawlessness between the races is no longer peculiar to the South. The problem is theirs, and they must, if the negroes are to remain, set about a solution. They can not solve it by general policy of racial extermination, that is, if they intend to remain a Christian people even in name. But if they make race separation a starting point, they will make progress toward a solution of the difficulties that are now overwhelming them." For the year 1919, Christianity in Tennessee was marred by the lynching of but one African American.35

The MI exploited its own set of Chicago images and lessons. After the riot, MI officers paid closer attention to race, if not their own ingrained prejudices. Assessing the violence of July 29, Lieutenant D. C. Van Buren related he had been informed "positively that the saloons in the negro district were selling whiskey openly on the counter, and it is believed that this is responsible, in a large measure, for a great deal of the disturbance."³⁶

MI agent J. H. Emerson interviewed the banker and realtor Jesse Binga forty-eight hours after the riot ended. Emerson reported: "He [Binga] felt there would continue to be trouble so long as there was any attempt to separate the blacks and whites. He seemed to harp on the fact that the colored race was fully as equal and wanted to give the impression that, if anything, they were somewhat superior to the white race." Conclusions fit the stereotypes held.³⁷

The riot allowed the MI to delay the curtailment of operations in peacetime. By June 1919 surveillance was becoming a matter of bureaucratic turf as the MI and the BI vied for the right to spy. Washington was alerted to the problem when each office blamed the other for leaking information to the Chicago press. In September a BI agent reported on a private meeting with Major Thomas Crockett to discuss radical activities in the region. The major said he was going to approach "several prominent manufacturers" to secure additional funding for New York's Lusk Committee. Crockett then pressed the agent for greater access to BI reports.

Two weeks later, a man claiming to be Crockett's chauffeur appeared at the BI's Chicago office; he requested papers a BI agent allegedly had promised to deliver. By November, BI division superintendent Edward J. Brennan notarized a statement: "I will not deliver copies of reports of this Chicago office to any department unless specifically directed to do so by the Chief of this Bureau in Washington." As a descendant of Davy Crockett, the major may have inherited the need to control his environment.³⁸

Crockett managed without Brennan's cooperation; he had the energy if not the evidence to argue that subversion continued into peacetime. "Thirty-five or more killed, several hundred injured in last night's race riots," he wired superiors in Washington during the riot. "Radicals reported to be urging negroes to further violence." Four months later, he warned: "The negro problem is no nearer settlement than ever, and trouble may be expected at any time." 39

The end of the riot did not stop the flow of reports about radical threats. Crockett telegraphed on August 30, "Reliable information anarchists will [make] attempt [on] lives President Wilson, Gompers or Secretary Baker labor day." During the next two months, agents attended meetings of the Communist party and its first convention. In September the steel strike provided yet another opportunity for the MI to assert itself.⁴⁰

An officer was dispatched to the Gary, Indiana, steel district as the MI received help from the American Patriotic League, comprised of veterans from the wartime APL. The Chicago office of the BI did not appreciate the aggressive competition. Instead, BI Chief Edward Brennan notified Washington that Crockett was using former APL members; the attorney general had disbanded the group in December 1918. In addition the MI had known for ten months that it was not to undertake any new civilian investigations.⁴¹

MI activities included—inevitably—State's Attorney Maclay Hoyne. Throughout November and December 1919, MI gave Hoyne information on the Communist and Communist Labor parties, the Industrial Workers of the World, radical meeting places, and possible radicalism in the Chicago public schools. When he forwarded material on a December meeting of the Socialist party, Colonel Gordon Johnston acted as though he were an ambitious assistant prosecutor trying to impress his superior: "It is

apparent from this report that remarks were made in violation of the Illinois Sedition Act." Hoyne did not need encouragement.⁴²

On New Year's Day 1920, the office of the state's attorney together with Chicago police conducted raids on 300 suspected radical hangouts; arrests netted 150 alleged subversives. He was forced to act, Hoyne explained, because the Justice Department of A. Mitchell Palmer was guilty of a "petty, pusillanimous and pussyfoot policy" toward the Bolshevik threat. The attorney general's raids began the next day.⁴³

The MI worked hard to fashion the image of a radical Chicago. The city Major Thomas Crockett reported on was filled with disaffected foreigners, blacks, and union members, the kind who gathered in meeting halls to sing:

BOLSHEVIK! BOLSHEVIK! BOLSHEVIK! BANG! WE BELONG TO THE GENE DEBS GANG. ARE WE REBELS? WELL I SHOULD SMILE, WE'RE FOR THE SOVIETS ALL THE WHILE.

LEFT WING, LEFT WING,RAH-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h WAKE 'EM UP, SHAKE 'EM UP, RAH-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h L,E,F,T, RAH-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-BOLSHEVIK!

Conditions seemed to merit further surveillance.44

The riot that caught so many observers by surprise began on a Sunday afternoon; Thompson would not be in the city until 8:15 A.M. Monday. He and an entourage of one hundred were attending the Frontier Day festivities in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Back in the West, Thompson reverted to his cowboy roots—the mayor of Chicago showed off his old skills on horseback when he lassoed a bystander during a parade.

Thompson still wore his cowboy Stetson when he stepped off the train in Chicago. At that moment he could not have much cared to resume the role of mayor. He was unprepared to offer anything beyond a piety: "I have just heard of the unfortunate race riot which smirched the fair name of Chicago, and I hope there will be no repetition of it." Yet there would be, for three days to come.⁴⁵

Despite Thompson's absence, Chicago was not entirely leaderless at the riot's onset. Governor Frank Lowden spent Saturday and Sunday in town mediating a threatened traction strike; Lowden left at 5:00 P.M. Monday afternoon for a speaking engagement in Lincoln, Nebraska. He returned in time to meet with Thompson on Tuesday, July 29, to discuss calling out

the National Guard, already stationed in city armories. During the People's Council incident in September 1917, Lowden took the initiative in dispatching troops from Springfield; now—even with a peacetime sedition act on the books—he waited until asked. On July 30, three days after the riot began, Thompson relented and made a formal request.⁴⁶

Whatever satisfaction he took from outwaiting Thompson, Lowden missed the chance to become the courageous leader who broke the riot; acclaim would have come at the political expense of his former ally. But Lowden was overcome with caution, and Thompson soon recovered. He immediately found new issues to move on, or appear to. Even before the riot's end, he was signing an ordinance for opening the lakefront to recreational development.

The legislation enacted yet another part of the Plan of Chicago. In 1851 the city had ceded control of its shoreline to the Illinois Central Railroad in return for the erection of a breakwater; the fight to free the land for public use dated to the late nineteenth century. Thompson used the signing to signal that he would not let four days of disturbances interfere with the long-term welfare of the city. The mayor of Chicago was on the job, and, if his performance had flagged during the riot, he would find ways to make voters forget.⁴⁷

Thompson quickly found yet another issue. A traction strike coinciding with the riot had led to fare increases, which Thompson promised to fight "to the last ditch." The real intent was to link Frank Lowden with wartime inflation. Fare rates were approved by the state public utilities commission, whose members were appointed by the governor. Thompson did not care why the cost of living had doubled in five years; beyond a politician's personal accountability, neither did the public. War meant inflation, and since Lowden supported the war, he must have wanted inflation and fare increases. Over the next decade, Thompson would become a master of the false premise.⁴⁸

And as ever he promised what could be, providing people were willing to follow his lead. In answer to the city's seemingly endless rapid transit problems (New York opened its first subway in 1904, Chicago not until 1943), Thompson proposed a city transportation district, complete with nickel fare. At the same time he gave the Chicago congressional delegation and Illinois senators his prescription for postwar prosperity.

A limited food embargo to protect against American starvation, prison for war profiteers, and rejection of the League of Nations all fit into a Thompson plan to honor "those who become expert in the operation of the tractor, the cultivator and the harvesting machine as well as giving medals for efficiency in handling the machine gun, poison gas and the bayonet." Given the chance, Big Bill Thompson would fulfill Old Testament prophecy if need be.⁴⁹

His next foray into foreign policy came in early 1920. He wrote the Senate that the League of Nations would become a "hellish scheme to deprive us of our freedom." His political instincts were unerring. Thompson anticipated that isolationism would return as a political staple for the 1920s. In that he was ahead of the *Tribune*, which as late as September 1919 supported the League with reservations. Thompson also realized that condemnation of the League promised a national audience and the attention of William Randolph Hearst. The mayor still harbored ambitions beyond city hall.⁵⁰

He could even fit isolationism into local politics. When the Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency urged rejection of a referendum for hiring an additional one thousand police officers, Thompson ignored the obvious counterpoint of crime or riot prevention. He instead focused on Julius Rosenwald, a founder of the organization and one of its contributors. Thompson attacked Rosenwald in a newspaper article as one of those "who seem willing to send our American boys to Siberia and to Europe to police the world, but [who] are opposed to a more adequate police force in Chicago." ⁵¹

The rhetoric was all part of Thompson's expanding politics of forceful inconsistencies. If he verged on the anti-Semitic in baiting Rosenwald, he also declared a campaign week for the Jewish Relief Fund. And if he slighted a French general in 1917, he paid particular attention to visiting Belgian and American war heroes in the fall of 1919.

Thompson appeared at a ceremony that October for Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier of Belgium. The mayor as host saluted his guest for "his deeds of mercy and in his heroic attempts to assuage and minimize the horrors of war which fell like a scourge" on his people. Thompson repeated the performance in December for the benefit of General John J. Pershing. When Pershing rode in a car or marched downtown, William Hale Thompson made sure to accompany him. It was unlikely that small talk with either guest included foreign policy according to *The Republican*. 52

Orthodox politicians feared the consequences of too many contradictions. By January 1920 Thompson was learning to thrive on their very number—they measured his growing strength as a demagogue. Given his wartime defense of free speech, Thompson should have been hurt by the Red Scare. Condemning the Hoyne and Palmer raids carried the risk of

being labeled a Bolshevik sympathizer, just as approving them would allow opponents to charge him with hypocrisy and political opportunism.

Thompson simply ignored the possible consequences. The police assisted Hoyne's office, and the mayor announced he would distribute 25,000 copies of the Constitution and Gettysburg Address. "There is little fear that the government and police will not be able to deal with the Reds. The trouble is that these forces are finding a fertile field in the discontent with the high cost of living. They are teaching the people the wrong way to redress their grievances." As Joseph McCarthy discovered, a demagogue did not have to make sense so much as to give the impression of it.⁵³

But Thompson was still cautious enough to pay attention to the Chicago business community. During the war the board of education acted on a recommendation by Thompson school superintendent John Shoop to cooperate on an adult English-education program for factory employees. In 1920 the lessons were compiled for a textbook. New school superintendent Peter A. Mortenson, also a Thompson ally, reviewed the program in the book's introduction: "It is hoped that reading, thinking [about] and discussing the subjects here presented will help the foreign-born obtain a better understanding of American customs and ideals." Like Thompson, Mortenson understood what Chicago business leaders wanted. 54

Sponsored by the Chicago Association of Commerce, the program soon established sixty-five classes attracting some six thousand attendees weekly. Participants included Armour and Company, Commonwealth Edison, and International Harvester, firms mindful of the need for a workforce literate, loyal, and unorganized. The student-employees graduated upon completion of a series of weekly lessons.

Ceremonies began with singing verse one of "America," followed by four talks totaling eleven minutes. (The classrooms were on plant premises, where industrialists no doubt realized that verbosity—even in the service of Americanization—ran counter to the adage on time and money.) Next the flag was unfurled to the accompaniment of the "Star-Spangled Banner." The workers then received their graduation pins, with "100% U.S." emblazoned between two crossed American flags. The program closed with an en masse salute of the flag and verse four of "America." 55

The association reported the program "has been used in different plants with strikingly gratifying results." Success was a product of the lessons, collected in A First Book in English for Non-English Speaking Adults by Frances K. Wetmore of the board of education. The exercises treated numerous subjects, with a particular focus. There was the lesson on hands—"We must keep our fingers out of the machine"—and time:

I look at my watch.
It is half past four.
I am sure my watch is right.
Last week I took my watch to the jeweler.
It ran too slow.
It lost five minutes every day.
It made me late to work.
The time-keeper docked me for lost time.
I had less pay, because I lost time.

Other lessons dealt with eating utensils, recreation, and holidays. Students learned that Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays were American holidays, as were the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving. Labor Day, however, was not mentioned.⁵⁶

Support of the education program demanded no more than a nod. Thompson usually preferred more obvious gestures, like the Chicago Boosters' Publicity Club. The organization was another attempt to render the nation's greatest industrial city into a tourist center. The club's board included Thompson and a number of sympathetic businessmen. "We have shown that the city of Chicago is just as much a product as a can of beans," the group explained in a 1920 report. Despite the awkward analogy, club members valued the importance of modern advertising.⁵⁷

National magazines and newspapers, outdoor displays, and a publicity bureau all would publicize Chicago's charms. "In addition," another report urged, "the tremendous audience reached by motion pictures will be sought. Every facility will be provided motion picture producers to chronicle happenings of interest for the various motion picture news weekly releases, and thus make our streets and buildings familiar to the people of the world." 58

Chicago had been the center for motion picture production in the early twentieth century; by 1920 the movies had left for the sun and warmth of Hollywood. While no amount of boosterism could lure back Gloria Swanson or Charlie Chaplin, Thompson consistently showed an interest in anything new that would promote the city or himself. Automobiles for a Prosperity Day parade, the newsreel, and the radio, all might be worked to advantage. And the boosters' club was another signal to the business community that Thompson was not entirely dangerous. All a skeptic had to do was check the club's advisory council, which included Charles Wacker and William Wrigley Jr.

The club's publication, *Greater Chicago Magazine*, was a booster's dream. Drawings and photographs portrayed a city consisting in equal parts of Hugh Ferris, Alfred Stieglitz, and John Sloan. Who could ask for a better destination? At the same time, the magazine's articles allowed politicians and associates to further their respective interests.

For Thompson, stories on the Lakes-Gulf Waterway and a lakefront airport and stadium were intended to reflect uncommon vision. After that there was room left over for the president of Northwestern University to write "Chicago, the New Athens" or Commonwealth Edison to explain why the amount of power generated in Chicago "exceeds the harnessed energy of the mighty Niagara." Regardless how often repeated, praise of place was not considered redundant or in bad taste.⁵⁹

The magazine's first issue read like a primer on modern propaganda techniques. The idea was to make the articles "become part of the sub-conscious and conscious thinking of our 400,000 school children and 500,000 wage-earners," a condition that would contribute to the "stabilization and stimulation of our industrial forces and to the dedication and conservation of our best and youngest life to the upholding of our city's greatness." There was more: "We propose to reach the school children by issuing to them as part of the regular school curriculum eight monthly lessons, one for each month of the school year, each lesson devoted to some phase of Chicago's development and points of interest." The board of education approved and supervised preparation of the lessons. "It is known that the impressions on the minds of youth are the most permanent. Our aim will be that Chicago's children will surpass all others in their intimate knowledge of their city." 60

Greater Chicago also had plans for adults. It would "Chicagoize' the working men and employees of the city's large industrial plants, factories and stores," just as Americanization had instilled "a love of country in the hearts of their employees, especially the foreign-born. Chicago, with a population exceeding 800,000 foreign-born, offers a fruitful field for the endeavor." Adult education would be achieved through circulars, "simple lessons on Chicago, so written that the facts will be quickly absorbed by untutored minds." 61

The appropriate leaflets were distributed through the city schools. Outside Chicago, billboards appeared alongside the routes of the New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads. The message was a simple "Stop A Day," although visitors to Atlantic City encountered the more intriguing (and mildly threatening) "Chicago Calls." But few tourists mistook smokestacks for mountains.

Even if they had, *Greater Chicago* faced a difficult task. Thompson had so fused the city's identity with his own during the war that other cities found the image too serviceable to let die. At some point, people began to believe what they read about Big Bill Thompson and Chicago. The politician and his city had already served to illustrate appropriate morals on patriotism and race. With the emergence of organized crime, the lessons would continue to the end of the decade. If some people wanted to visit such a place, many others sought to avoid it.⁶²

But out-of-town papers could not undo Thompson's reputation as big builder. In May 1920, work finished on the Michigan Avenue bridge over the Chicago River. The area north of the river underwent a seemingly overnight, massive redevelopment. Warehouses and old homes literally vanished, replaced by a line of stores, offices, and skyscrapers, including the *Tribune*'s famed tower. Thompson exploited opening ceremonies with a two-hour parade of automobiles, trucks, and floats; overhead, airplanes showered the crowd with booster pamphlets. Thompson realized it was not an occasion for understatement: "This is the greatest day for our people, the Chicago Plan Commission and the administration." 63

The bridge opening was only one of Thompson's victories that year; the others were political. Following the April aldermanic elections, Thompson finally convinced the city council to break with the MVL over the makeup of the committee on committees. Meanwhile, Thompson controlled the county GOP convention and forced through his own platform. Among its planks were a foreign policy guided by the spirit of George Washington, the right of free speech, and preparedness without militarism.⁶⁴

Not all Republicans were impressed. Charles Dawes, for one, preferred the views of presidential candidate Frank Lowden. Dawes thought Lowden would be a leader "who will not have to lay himself at the feet of the Scandinavian, the Irish, the Negro or anybody else." But Lowden could not run on testimonials alone. As a one-term governor, he had few accomplishments of substance. The riots in East St. Louis and Chicago did nothing to enhance his reputation, and his inability to silence Thompson eventually would cost him all chance for nomination. Still, he campaigned hard on an Americanism defined by Dawes and codified by the peacetime sedition act he had signed into law. When the national convention met at the Coliseum in early June, Lowden had made himself a front-runner, if not a favorite.⁶⁵

Party leaders broke the convention deadlock at the Blackstone Hotel in the smoke-filled backroom deal of legend. Warren G. Harding emerged the winner after Thompson helped destroy Lowden's candidacy. That January in Missouri, Lowden's campaign manager, Louis L. Emmerson, gave \$2,500 checks to two men who became convention delegates. With the backing of the Chicago Herald-Examiner, Thompson worked the incident into a crusade for party ethics. (The paper ran page-one cartoons identifying Lowden's candidacy with the caricature of a full-lipped Pullman porter.) Then, realizing he could not win reelection as state GOP committeeman, Thompson walked out of the convention; to stay would have bound him as a delegate-at-large for Lowden. Thompson appeared the principled statesman in a newspaper that had opposed his reelection only fourteen months before: "I will not knowingly make myself a party to placing the Republican nomination for President on the auction block." Thompson backed Senator Hiram Johnson for the nomination, as did convention visitor William Randolph Hearst. While Johnson fell short, it did not really matter to Thompson and Hearst. They were developing an appreciation of each other's abilities.66

During the convention the Illinois delegation moved to name a new national committeeman and reject Thompson's proposed state platform. It was all the satisfaction respectable Republicans would get. Soon after the convention adjourned, Lennington "Len" Small announced he would use Thompson's platform in his campaign for the GOP gubernatorial nomination. From Kankakee, Small sensed the popularity of La Follette–like issues: opposition to American participation in the League of Nations, income tax exemptions for those earning under \$5,000, the repeal of peacetime sedition legislation, a veterans' bonus, and imprisonment of war profiteers. Thompson finally had himself a protégé.⁶⁷

Critics during the party primaries had identified Thompson with the worst excesses of New York and Moscow. Lowden supported Lieutenant Governor John G. Oglesby as his successor so that "the Thompson Tammany will be stopped at the Cook County line." The *Tribune* offered the same refrain. "No Thompson Tammany for Illinois," an editorial urged. "Twist Tail of Tammany Tiger!" crowned the list of *Tribune* primary endorsements.⁶⁸

Thompson was alleged to be too much a Democrat and too little an American. More than a primary slate was at stake, Lowden warned. "This is the moment when loyal Illinois citizens are to be aligned against the most dangerous form of bolshevism as it is being practiced in the United States at the present time." Senate primary candidate William McKinley charged Thompson with the political sins of trying to establish not one but two alien systems—Tammanyism and socialism. A McKinley press release

called the Thompson platform "an effort to stir up class hatred, aggravate the present condition of unrest and in truth promote socialism." 69

Compared to Charles Francis Murphy, Thompson was more bolshevik than sachem. Murphy sought political advantage through organization and caution, Thompson increasingly through the sheer force of personality. There is a story about Murphy not singing the "Star-Spangled Banner" at a Fourth of July celebration because, in the words of a subordinate, "perhaps he didn't want to commit himself." This was not the Thompson way. When he introduced his slate for the primary, Thompson did not consider the Auditorium; it was too sedate, part of an earlier image. By July 1920, he wanted a venue that would satisfy his new constituency.⁷⁰

He found it at Riverview Amusement Park. A vaudeville chorus warmed up the crowd of 100,000, there to hear a new hero. "We are not ashamed of the place we get our money," he told them. "You can't serve the people and the public utility corporations at the same time." The performance raised \$100,000 in the fight against Lowden, compulsory military training, and the utilities.⁷¹

The most important contests were for governor and state's attorney. Small and Robert Emmett Crowe, another Thompson choice, won their respective primaries. "At the time of going to press, it looks like Bill," the *Tribune* admitted. "Comment fails us." Yet the answers were obvious and had been since the *Tribune* editorial of March 6, 1917—"If Rosenwald and Thompson Traded Places." Chicago was forced to function with a decentralized form of government that encouraged politics over efficiency. The politically astute succeeded by joining alliances and embracing whatever issues the situation demanded.⁷²

In the fall of 1920, a downstate politician eager to become governor found an ally in the mayor of Chicago. Thompson offered Len Small an audience within the city, and if he won, Small had the power of appointment over the West Parks and Lincoln Park Boards. To counter that move, opponents had to find better allies and issues. They did not realize that Americanism was, essentially, yesterday's news. Riverview and veterans' bonuses proved more popular with a majority of voters.

Consolation for the losers in the Republican primary came by way of the Democrats. The party of Jackson, Roger Sullivan, and, after Sullivan's death in April 1920, George Brennan was no more adept than orthodox Republicans in finding politically attractive issues. They too would fall victim to Thompson one way or another.

The Democratic nominee for governor was J. Hamilton Lewis, a Virginia native who had served a term in Congress for Washington State before

moving to Chicago. Campaigning in Hyde Park, Lewis offered prejudices of limited political value: "So long as I have breath to speak, I shall raise my voice to criminal Negroes from lording it over Christian white men." Lewis appealed to the anxieties of Hyde Parkers worried over an expanding Black Belt, only to find the message did not carry as far as expected.⁷³

Lewis's comments failed to secure the anticipated support from ethnic groups. They wanted answers to problems such as declining property values in racially changing neighborhoods and dealing with nonunion, black co-workers. When a reverse-carpetbagger spoke, the immigrant voter detected a lack of understanding. Compared to 1916, the Democratic vote for governor declined significantly among Germans, Italians, Jews, and Poles.⁷⁴

Two days before the election, thousands of people attended a downtown rally, but not for any candidate. They gathered to remember Terrence MacSwiney, the lord mayor of Cork who had died six days earlier following a seventy-four-day hunger fast in Brixton Prison. When the proceedings moved indoors to the Coliseum, Thompson was cheered by the audience as "Ireland's great friend." He responded in kind with praise for the Irish, a group that "did more than any other single people to make this nation possible." Next, he issued a warning. "If they get that league, some [sic] of these mornings you will wake up and find that the league has ordered all of you to sing 'God Save the King' every day. And when that day comes, your mayor for one will tell them to go to hell."⁷⁵

The rally totally upstaged the Cox campaign, which had stopped in Chicago a day earlier. The Ohio governor promised to "present to the bar of public opinion and to the conscience of the earth the cause of the Irish people." But the pledge did not stop Edward Dunne from introducing Thompson to the Coliseum audience. Prominent Democrats, including former governors, were supposed to avoid rallies that imperiled the chances of the national ticket. The proscription assumed, of course, that the local party organization was strong enough to enforce it.⁷⁶

Thompson's new politics worked well, frustrating Frank Lowden as it helped elect allies as governor and state's attorney. Moreover, the onetime hero of the Guardians of Liberty had become a convincing Irish nationalist. In November, Bridgeport voted as Thompson wanted, for Harding over Cox. So did 70 percent of the Chicago electorate.

Following the September primaries, Thompson had city lawyers file two \$10 million libel suits against the *Tribune* and *Daily News*; he did not like how the press portrayed municipal finances. But the politician was not yet a total demagogue. He still had a bit of 1915 left in him: "I'm tired of toting

the lid on [saloon] cheaters," he said following the election. "Ike Bloom's and Colosimo's places are through, and there are a lot more on the way." The Thompson who promised a campaign platform "wetter than that in the middle of the Atlantic" was another six years in the making.⁷⁷

Notes

- 1. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 7, 1919, Apr. 23, 1919, Apr. 27, 1919.
- 2. For Eye Witness series, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 7-11, 1919 (quote from May 11, 1919).
 - 3. Chicago Tribune, June 28, 1919.
- 4. Chicago Tribune, June 29, 1919. For the housing shortage confronting blacks, see Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890–1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 147–50, and James R. Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 136–40; for "second Lincoln," see Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 62.
- 5. For background on Abbott, see Roi Ottley, *The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955), 74-77, 88, 140-41; *Chicago Defender* headlines from Apr. 29, 1916, May 20, 1916. Abbott never became a member of the Illinois bar.
- 6. For distribution, see Ottley, Lonely Warrior, 136-37; for efforts to restrict circulation, see Spear, Black Chicago, 135-36, and Grossman, Land of Hope, 44; for the Defender story, see Chicago Defender, Feb. 24, 1917; for the New Orleans incident, see Theodore Kornweibel, ed., Federal Surveillance of Afro-Americans (1917-1925): The First World War, the Red Scare, and the Garvey Movement (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1985), case file 9969, report dated Oct. 4, 1916, reel 5.
- 7. For all of these reports, see Kornweibel, *Surveillance*, case file Old German 5911, reel 9. Only the Durand letter of July 3, 1917, includes a legible day of the month. The Jacksonville and New Orleans reports were made in Apr. 1917; those in Tucson, Dec. 1917; Pine Bluff, May 1918; and Mobile, Sept. 1918.
- 8. Apr. 1917 BI report, Kornweibel, *Surveillance*, case file Old German 5911, reel 9; Post Office Solicitor to *Defender* (no names given), June 13, 1918, Kornweibel, *Surveillance*, case file 47552, reel 13.
- 9. M. E. Nash to Post Office Solicitor, June 22, 1918; Williams to Burleson, June 22, 1918; and Burleson to Williams, July 11, 1918, all in Kornweibel, *Surveillance*, case file 47552, reel 13. In a June 13, 1918, memo for the post office solicitor, it was charged *Defender* stories "rarely, if ever, mention the provocations furnished by the victims and, if such provocations are mentioned, they are usually discredited. The victim is always characterized as an innocent victim of race prejudice or race hatred" (reel 13).

- 10. Sheppard to Burleson, July 17, 1919, Kornweibel, Surveillance, case file 47552, reel 13; for the June 3, 1919, Abbott interview, see Kornweibel, Surveillance, Glasser File, reel 16; for the subscription list, see Kornweibel, Surveillance, case file 10218–133, reel 19.
- 11. For background on labor, see William M. Tuttle Jr., Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919 (New York: Atheneum, 1978), 136-39, and Chicago Tribune, June 27-July 1, 1919.
- 12. The standard interpretations of the riot are Chicago Commission on Race Relations, The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922); Tuttle, Race Riot; and Spear, Black Chicago. Arguing that ethnic groups were fully integrated into American urban society down to their racism is Thomas Lee Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880–1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).
- 13. This awakened sense of identity is discussed in Edward R. Kantowicz, *Polish-American Politics in Chicago*, 1888–1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 110–19; Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), chap. 6; and Melvin G. Holli, "The Great War Sinks German *Kultur*," in *Ethnic Chicago*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, revised and expanded (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 462–90. For Masaryk and Czechoslovakia, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 3–7, 1918.
- 14. For Irish nationalism in Chicago, see Michael F. Funchion, "Irish Chicago: Church, Homeland, Politics, and Class—The Shaping of an Ethnic Group," in Ethnic Chicago, 14–45; and Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Ellen Skerrett, Michael F. Funchion, and Charles Fanning, The Irish in Chicago (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Funchion sees Irish nationalism as a declining force by the time of the riot. My argument is that ethnicity revived interest in Irish independence that summer.
- 15. For translations of Polish accounts, see *Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey* (Chicago: Works Progress Administration, 1942), L/C. (Attitudes, Own and Other Language Groups), *Dziennik Zwiazkowy*, May 27, 1918; for Lithuanian accounts, see *Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey*, III./H. (Assimilation, Relations with Homeland), *Lieutuva*, May 31, 1918. The project basically translated editorials, categorized them in outline form, and presented them in inverse chronological order.
- 16. For the Douglas Park incident, see Chicago Daily News, June 7, 1919, and Chicago Tribune, June 9, 1919; for arraignments, see Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, I./C. (Attitudes, Own and Other Language Groups), Jewish Daily Courier, June 6, 1919; for the meeting with Garrity, see Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, II./E./2. (Contributions and Activities, Crime and Delinquency, Individual Crime), Jewish Daily Courier, June 25, 1919. Garrity replaced Herman Schuettler as chief in November 1918.

- 17. Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey, I./C. (Attitudes, Own and Other Language Groups), Jewish Daily Courier, July 25, 1919, July 27, 1919.
- 18. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 12, 1919, Apr. 18, 1919, May 30, 1919, June 8, 1919, June 22, 1919.
- 19. For Dunne in New York, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1919; for Dunne in Chicago, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 1919; for De Valera in Chicago, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 13–15, 1919.
- 20. For the Lager Beer Riots and 1877 clashes, see Emmett Dedmon, *Fabulous Chicago*, enlarged ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1981), 52–53, 151–53 (Heath quoted on 152).
- 21. For Haymarket Square and comments, see Ray Ginger, Altgeld's America: The Lincoln Ideal versus Changing Realities (New York: New Viewpoints, 1973), 49, 85; for the ethnicity of rioters, see Philip S. Foner, ed., The Haymarket Autobiographies (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).
- 22. In his study of police conduct during strikes, Howard Barton Myers notes that the police used the terms "kikes," "wops," "bohunks," and "polacks," the use of which probably came out in testimony to the city council Committee on Schools, Fire, Police, and Civil Service. The testimony and council report apparently were destroyed sometime after Myers read them in 1929. "Policing," 824. As late as 1964, 41 of the 72 most important administrative posts in the police department went to Irish appointees. Of the 35 heads of police the city had to 1966, 21 were Irish. Edward M. Levine, *The Irish and Irish Politicians: A Study of Cultural and Social Alienation* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 120n. After the 1916 Cook County committee elections, 70 percent of the winners in Democratic contests were Irish; in 1962, 21 of the 50 Democratic ward committeemen in the city were Irish. Paul M. Green, "The Chicago Democratic Party, 1840–1920: From Factionalism to Political Organization" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1975), 270, and Levine, *Irish Politicians*, 146.
- 23. Spear (1967), Tuttle (1970), and Philpott (1978) may have imposed the racial unrest of the 1960s onto the events of 1919 to the point that an ethnic component to the riot was either lost or dismissed as irrelevant. My argument is that the riot was in part an incident of transferred aggression, with blacks the easiest victim. As theory it does not appear to have been considered by social scientists although Louis H. Masotti and Don R. Bowen do treat frustration-aggression somewhat differently than the writers above. See *Riots and Rebellion: Civil Violence in the Urban Community* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1968), esp. part 1.

Blacks and ethnic groups may have been involved in a similar situation in the 1850s: Rather than confront the issues raised by slavery, many WASPs joined the Know-Nothing movement and transferred their frustrations onto Irish and German immigrants.

- 24. Tuttle, Race Riot, 3-10.
- 25. Chicago Commission on Race Relations, Negro in Chicago, 4-20; Tuttle, Race Riot, 32-66.

- 26. Chicago Commission on Race Relations, Negro in Chicago, xv.
- 27. Tuttle, Race Riot, 60-61.
- 28. Chicago Commission on Race Relations, Negro in Chicago, 20-21; Tuttle, Race Riot, 60-61.
- 29. For black employment and bombings, see Chicago Commission on Race Relations, Negro in Chicago, 412, 122–29; for the flag burning, see Chicago Tribune, June 21, 1920. The packers chose blacks as another source of nonunion labor, as they once had Eastern Europeans. Catherine Elizabeth Lewis, "Trade Union Policies in Regard to the Negro Worker in the Slaughtering and Meatpacking Industry of Chicago" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1945), 22. De Valera did travel again to Chicago for the 1920 Republican convention, but this time the public was more interested in the melodrama on the convention floor. Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1920.
 - 30. New York Times, July 28, 1919, Aug. 3, 1919.
 - 31. New York Times, Aug. 3, 1919.
- 32. For Hoyne, see Atlanta Constitution, July 30, 1919, Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 31, 1919; Houston Chronicle editorial, July 30, 1919; Chicago Tribune reprint of Houston Chronicle editorial, Aug. 3, 1919.
- 33. Atlanta Constitution, July 30, 1919; for the Georgia lynching figure, see Negro Year Book, 1921–1922 (Tuskegee Institute, Ala.: Negro Year Book Publishing Company, 1922), 358, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS).
- 34. For the Southern viewpoint, see Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 31, 1919; for mob comparison, see Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 30, 1919.
- 35. For *Chicago Tribune* reprint and observations, see Aug. 3, 1919; for the Tennessee lynching total, see *Negro Year Book*, 358.

Immediately following the riot, the Chicago Herald-Examiner sent telegrams to Southern officials as part of what the paper called "a continuation of the survey of labor conditions in the South." Herald-Examiner readers learned how "Dixie" Extends Invitation to Chicago Negroes" in the responses of various officials. The Memphis Commercial Appeal, however, ran short stories that South Carolina and Georgia were not interested while Tennessee would welcome "industrious negroes." Memphis Commercial Appeal, Aug. 2, 1919; Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 4, 1919.

- 36. Kornweibel, Surveillance, Glasser File, reel 16.
- 37. Kornweibel, Surveillance, case file 10218-353, reel 21.
- 38. For details of the turf argument, see Kornweibel, *Surveillance*, case file Old German 366256, BI reports filed June 28, 1919, Sept. 12, 1919, Sept. 27, 1919, Nov. 4, 1919, reel 12. The Lusk quote comes from the BI report of Sept. 12, 1919; the phrasing is the agent's. For Crockett's ancestry, see Joan M. Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), 25.
- 39. Crockett to MI headquarters telegrams, July 29, 1919, Nov. 26, 1919, Kornweibel, Surveillance, Glasser File, reel 16.
- 40. Crockett to MI headquarters telegram, Aug. 30, 1919, and Communist party reports, Boehm, *Military Intelligence*, file series 10110–853, reel 10.

- 41. Brennan to Frank Burke, Oct. 21, 1919, Kornweibel, *Surveillance*, case file Old German 366256, reel 12; for the strike and the Justice Department's attitude toward the APL, see Jensen, *Vigilance*, 243–46, 279–80.
- 42. MI correspondence to Hoyne, Boehm, *Military Intelligence*, file series 10110–853, reel 11; Johnston to Hoyne, Jan. 2, 1920, Boehm, *Military Intelligence*, file series 10110–55, reel 1.
- 43. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 2, 1920. Hoyne hoped to exploit the raids in his bid for a third term, but he lost in the Democratic primary of September 1920.
- 44. For songs, see Boehm, *Military Intelligence*, file series 10110–853, reel 10. The report of September 10, 1919, does not indicate if agents were required to sing along as part of their cover.
 - 45. Chicago Daily News, July 25, 1919, quoted in Chicago Journal, July 28, 1919.
- 46. Lowden's movements are traced in the *Chicago Tribune*, July 26–29, 1919. Lowden's biographer, William T. Hutchinson, wrote William Tuttle that the governor lacked the peacetime authority to act. Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 47n. Assuming that Lowden was aware of the situation unfolding, he could have considered using the sedition act he signed into law four weeks earlier. The MI, as already noted, believed radicals were at least in part responsible for the riot. The act is reprinted in *Laws of the State of Illinois*, 51st General Assembly.
- 47. Chicago Tribune, Aug. 1, 1919. Lowden may have thought he would gain sufficient political capital in appointing a commission to investigate the causes of the riot. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations and its work are considered in Anthony Platt, ed., The Politics of Riot Commissions, 1917–1970: A Collection of Official Reports and Critical Essays (New York: Collier Books, 1971).
- 48. For rate increases and the promise, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 7-8, 1919; for the cost of living index, see Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, *Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1976), 212.
- 49. For Thompson as peacemaker, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1919; for the transportation district, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 10, 1919.
- 50. For dangers of the League of Nations, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 7, 1920; *Chicago Tribune* editorial, Sept. 25, 1919.
- 51. For criticism of Rosenwald, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1919; for background on the Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency, see M. R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 139–41. The bureau was an outgrowth of the local Progressive movement; its interest in efficiency made it a kind of bipartisan pariah. The bureau enjoyed one small victory, however. The police referendum lost.
- 52. For the Jewish Relief Fund, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1919; for Cardinal Mercier, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1919; for Pershing, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1919; *The Republican*.
 - 53. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 3, 1920.
- 54. For background on the Americanization program, see Chicago Board of Education, Proceedings of the Board of Education, Oct. 17, 1917; for Morten-

son's introduction, see Frances K. Wetmore, A First Book in English for Non-English Speaking Adults (Chicago: Chicago Association of Commerce, 1920). After Shoop's death in August 1918, Charles E. Chadsey was named school superintendent by the Loeb board. When Thompson regained control of the board, it appointed Mortenson. Chadsey then won a court order to be reinstated but resigned after two weeks when the board stripped him of virtually all authority. Mortenson again assumed the superintendency. See Chicago Tribune, June 5, 1919, Nov. 13, 1919, Nov. 27, 1919; see also Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 138–39.

- 55. Chicago Association of Commerce and Chicago Board of Education, A Year of Americanization Work, July 1918–July 1919 (Apr. 1931), CHS.
 - 56. Assessment from ibid.; Wetmore, First Book, 59.
 - 57. Chicago Boosters' Publicity Club, "Report," CHS.
- 58. Chicago Boosters' Publicity Club, A Plan to Boost Chicago: A Concerted and Organized Plan, Open to All, for the Good of All (1920), CHS.
- 59. See *Greater Chicago Magazine*: waterway article, Aug. 1920; advisory board, Nov.–Dec. 1920; airport and stadium, Sept. 1922; "Athens," Nov. 1922; Commonwealth Edison, Jan. 1923.
 - 60. Greater Chicago Magazine, Aug. 1920.
 - 61. Ibid.
- 62. For education leaflets and billboards, see *Greater Chicago Magazine*, Apr. 1921; for Atlantic City, see *Greater Chicago Magazine*, Aug.-Sept. 1921.
- 63. Chicago Tribune, May 15, 1920, Chicago Herald-Examiner, May 15, 1920. The *Tribune* and *Daily News* may have sensed Thompson's growing strength from utilizing public works; neither quoted his remarks.
- 64. For council moves, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 29, 1920, May 4, 1920; for the platform, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 27, 1920. The council decision highlighted the differences between Thompson and Anton Cermak, who would defeat him in his bid for a fourth term in 1931. Thompson was content merely to criticize the MVL; as alderman of the Twelfth Ward, Cermak made sure to lead the council break with the organization.
- 65. Chicago Tribune, May 21, 1920. Lowden spent much of the time before the convention warning against the dangers of radicalism. William T. Hutchinson, Lowden of Illinois: The Life of Frank O. Lowden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 2:388-89, 394-95, 419-20.
- 66. For convention coverage, see Hutchinson, Lowden, 2:chaps. 18, 19, Chicago Herald-Examiner, June 1–11, 1920; for Thompson's resignation, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, June 12, 1920; for Hearst's visit, see W. A. Swanberg, Citizen Hearst (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 333. In a letter dated October 30, 1931, to Senator Smith Brookhart, Thompson noted that he and Hearst, probably at the 1920 convention, tried to advise Johnson, "but at the end of the two hours we both became discouraged and went away without having an opportunity to discuss the matter [of the Republican nomination] with him." Brookhart

forwarded the letter to Johnson. Box 74, CB 581, Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

- 67. For defeat and rejection of Thompson's platform, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1920; for Small's pledge, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 24, 1920.
- 68. For Lowden on Tammany, see Chicago Tribune, July 10, 1920; Chicago Tribune editorial, Aug. 6, 1920.
- 69. Chicago Tribune, Aug. 22, 1920. The Tammany charge had some relevance in the spring of 1920, when Thompson captured control of the city Republican organization by winning thirty-four of thirty-five committeeman races. Two months later, the state supreme court declared the Illinois primary law unconstitutional and invalidated the results of the earlier election. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 14, 1920, June 17, 1920.
- 70. Nancy Joan Weiss, Charles Francis Murphy, 1858–1924: Respectability and Responsibility in Tammany Politics (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1968), 98–99.
- 71. Chicago Tribune, July 11, 1920. In 1919 Thompson also began sponsoring annual trips to Riverview for public school children.
 - 72. Chicago Tribune, Sept. 16, 1920.
 - 73. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26, 1920.
- 74. The 1916 percentages for Democratic votes for governor compared with those in 1920 are German, 46/31; Italian, 67/36; Jewish, 66/31; Polish, 68/46; and black, 28/19. See John M. Allswang, A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890–1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), 42, 219. The slating of Lewis was bound to offend working-class voters who could not identify with the candidate's dandified dress or aristocratic manner. The candidate in 1916 was Edward Dunne, an Irish Catholic who became an outspoken critic of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.
 - 75. Chicago Tribune, Nov. 1, 1920.
- 76. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 31, 1920. Thompson's manipulation of Irish nationalism contrasts strongly with William Tuttle's assertion that "the Irish and certain other Catholic groups harbored resentment and even hatred of Thompson and whoever supported him, particularly if those supporters were black." Race Riot, 198–99. James Grossman says Thompson "earned the hatred of many of Chicago's Catholic immigrants for his nativist rhetoric and anti-Catholic slurs." Land of Hope, 176.

Paul Green, however, sees 1920 as the beginning of a unified Democratic party organization. "Chicago Democratic Party," chap. 10. Arthur W. Thurner offers a more exacting view of the Democrats, as "an imperfect but useful vehicle" for ethnic political aspirations; when the Irish party heads ignored other groups, Thompson succeeded in "stealing the power of the Democrats in championing the emerging groups to vote for him." "The Impact of Ethnic Groups on the Democratic Party, 1920–1928" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1966), 1–3.

While it might have seemed to many ethnic groups that all Democratic leaders

were Irish, not all of the Irish were Democrats. The image of Richard J. Daley has obscured both the need of many Chicago Irish to seek legitimacy in the Republican party and Thompson's ability to exploit that insecurity. The furniture retailer John M. Smythe and the lumberman Edward Hines were prominent Irish-Catholic Republicans before Thompson became mayor, and there was nothing in Thompson that made Robert Emmett Crowe, Michael Faherty, or Charles Fitzmorris doubt his faith or party preference. Biographical information at CHS.

77. Election results in *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1921, 775, 788–89. Harding outpolled Cox 549,243 to 182,252; both Bridgeport wards—the Fourth and Fifth—went to Harding. For libel suits, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1920; for the Ike Bloom comment, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 5, 1920; for the wet promise, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 15, 1927.

The legends surrounding Chicago's Prohibition era differ markedly from the reality. As will be seen in the following chapters, at no time during his second term did Thompson question the utility of the Volstead Act. For a dispassionate consideration of the institution that became the victim of Prohibition, see Perry R. Duis, The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983). Duis notes that Prohibition came to Chicago not in January 1920 but in July 1919, thanks to the provisions of wartime prohibition legislation (passed, ironically, after the Armistice).

5

New Appeals, Temporary Retreat

The phone rang. Studs was glad it was for him. He went out of the parlor. Lonigan picked up his newspaper to read about the Grand Jury quiz of some aldermen implicated in a school board graft.

-James T. Farrell, The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan

BOLSHEVIK, PACIFIST, SACHEM: Thompson won regardless of the label. A clue to his success appeared in the *Daily News* on August 20, 1921. But the lower right-hand corner of page three consisted of something other than exposé or editorial. "These Birds Will Make You Money," promised a real estate advertisement. Suburban Orland Park was an "ideal place to raise ducks, geese, turkeys or chickens." An ad alongside boasted: "There is big money in chickens. Buy one or two or more of these fine 1/2-acres and raise chickens. You can live here and work in Chicago the same as now." In time the chicken farm yielded to other Jazz Age fads like bobbed hair and mahjongg. But suburbanization remained a constant that affected Chicago politics throughout the 1920s.1

Development transformed such inner-ring suburbs as Berwyn, Oak Park, and Evanston. Berwyn was home to 6,000 people in 1910; Oak Park, 19,000; and Evanston, 25,000. By 1930 the respective figures were 47,000, 64,000, and 63,000. Overall, the quaintly named "country towns" and unincorporated areas of Cook County numbered 220,000 people the year Theodore Roosevelt returned from Africa and Europe, 351,000 by the election of Warren Harding, and 606,000 midway through the presidency of Herbert Hoover.²

Chicago grew as well. The 1910 population of 2.2 million reached 2.7 million in 1920 and 3.4 million a decade later. Still, those figures masked unprecedented suburban growth. For decades the city's middle-class voters confronted an oftentimes unresponsive government. They had two alternatives to the political status quo—a move up the class ladder into a lifestyle of suburban wealth and isolation or membership in a municipal reform group. By 1920, affordable transportation created a third option: The commuter train, interurban, and automobile offered an affordable escape from the city and its politics.³

Harold Ickes, that quintessential Chicago reformer, showed the way. Ickes had tilted at city hall as the manager of mayoral campaigns for John Maynard Harlan in 1905 and Charles Merriam six years later. Both candidates lost, and by 1913 Ickes was finished with Chicago, at least as a home. He tried Evanston before settling in the Hubbard Woods section of Winnetka on the North Shore. There he was free to build his curmudgeon's castle.

Donald Randall Richberg, Ickes's former law partner, held out until the 1920s, when he moved to semirural Palos Park. If Ickes and Richberg left on their own, others were made restless by the weekend *Tribune* and *Daily News*, whose real estate sections printed idyllic images of suburbia coupled with bold predictions of wealth. The William Zelosky Company advertised, "Where The 'L' Goes Profit Grows." Chicagoans believed—and moved. With them went the voice of political dissent and opposition to a certain mayor.⁴

Thompson also did well by immigration restriction. The followers of Madison Grant never anticipated the cost of protecting their WASP heritage with shorter lines at Ellis Island. Before restriction New Immigrants returned to the old country (or thought about it) whenever the need arose; Americanization could be delayed or avoided altogether. That luxury disappeared the moment Warren Harding signed the restriction into law. The residents of Polish Downtown and Little Italy either left for good or claimed the protection of American citizenship.

Restriction meant city machines no longer recruited newcomers fresh from steerage; ethnics, however, were free to seek their Smith and Roosevelt revolutions. In 1920 Chicago counted 884,000 registered voters. By 1924 the figure had grown to 1,065,000 before reaching 1,314,000 in 1928; the ethnic ghettoes were coming of age. Down to 1932 success went to the politicians capable of attracting the newly enfranchised. Certain to be frustrated were respectable Republicans who offered the abstraction of good

government and Democrats intent on honoring Irish-first power bases. Against that backdrop, Thompson fashioned an alternative that nonelite Chicago found tempting.⁵

The Big Bill of legend made relatively few appearances between 1921 and 1923; the actual politician was a discerning demagogue those two years. Issues had to be selected carefully, with appeals to ethnic groups, blacks, and organized labor balanced with the interests of business. Any mistakes and wealthy suburbanites could still contribute to the campaigns of his Chicago critics. Of course Thompson always found ways to include the grand gesture, especially one that could be called a Pageant of Progress. Organized in 1921, the pageant took place at Municipal Pier for fifteen days beginning in late July. A series of beauty pageants together with the inevitable parade fanned public interest.⁶

Daily attendance averaged 55,000 people, with those coming the second day treated—or subjected—to the release of 5,000 Pigeons of Prosperity. Pageantgoers walked the 3,000-foot pier to behold three miles of displays. Exhibits included one hundred washing machine models; houses constructed of brick, coal, and monkey wrenches; and a working model of the Michigan Boulevard bridge. The Chicago Plan Commission distributed 300,000 booklets while the city department of gas and electricity ushered in a new age—radio linked the pier with city hall.

The pageant also made for an unexpected though convenient arrangement: Thompson and the military both chose to forget his wartime remarks. The politician needed entertainment for the crowds; the army and navy, desperate for publicity in peacetime, wanted an audience for their parachute jumps and offshore maneuvers. As part of the closing-day festivities, a navy subchaser shelled a replica of the *Santa Maria*, built for the 1893 Columbian Exposition.⁷

Secretary of Labor James J. Davis gave the opening address: "To him all credit and honor. On behalf of the President of the United States and for myself let me congratulate once more Mayor Thompson of Chicago for this new expression of the ancient spirit of courage and enterprise in your people." The pariah of 1917–18 was no more; Davis signaled that, for the national GOP at least, Thompson was again a Republican in good standing. Only pageant guest Pietro Badoglio of Italy dissented, over a matter other than Thompson. Mussolini's eventual successor was disturbed by the American countryside. "I have seen great stretches of idle land on my trip between New York and Chicago. This must be overcome."

While the *Daily News* and *Tribune* covered the pageant daily, they could not bring themselves to credit Thompson by name. The task of personal

publicity fell to Hearst papers, morning and afternoon. "At the moment his enemies were calling the plans of the exposition a political coup," the Herald-Examiner noted, "the mayor was working day and night to put it over and, as he says, to 'put it over right.'" Thompson also appeared as the heroic visionary in the American, where his biographer-to-be William H. Stuart worked as political editor: "It was his desire that the exposition be educational, entertaining, enterprising—and more than all that be Chicago's proof that THERE IS PROSPERITY HERE, AT LEAST."9

During the pageant, the American praised a second Thompson project that had just started. This was a publication, Main 13, described in an editorial as "A Magazine for Policemen BY Policemen." In 1916 Charles Healey disciplined officers who tried to form a benefit society. Five years later Charles Fitzmorris published a magazine devoted "to news of the police department and articles of interest to the policeman and his family." Attitudes toward the rank and file changed while the mayor who named both chiefs of police remained the same.¹⁰

"I believe I know something of the police department," Thompson wrote in the introductory issue. "I know something of your achievements, maybe something of your discouragements, maybe something of your shortcomings, because we all have them, I equally with you." Citing his experience as a football team captain, he urged, "Teamwork and you will win the championship—the Greatest Police Department in the World."¹¹

The magazine—named for the department's telephone exchange—functioned in large part as a municipal cheerleader. In May 1921, Main 13 publicized the upcoming Pageant of Progress, gave space to Charles Dawes ("I have this always in mind about police duty. Society is never at rest"), and praised the Chicago Crime Commission, an organization "quick to tell us where we are wrong, but just as ready and enthusiastic to certify the accomplishments of the department." Boosting the necessary politician, business, and civic organization was now part of police work.¹²

The American did not exaggerate. Main 13 was intended for the benefit of the police officer. Cover illustrations portrayed the policeman as he saw himself—smiling yet vigilant, ready to patrol downtown or outlying neighborhood, and happy to deliver a food basket to the poor at Christmas. And the magazine demonstrated how much the latest version of Thompson differed from the first. Thompson no longer upbraided public employees; instead, he honored them with Police Field Day.¹³

A weekend of police athletic competitions drew one hundred thousand spectators in September 1922. Like other Thompson events, this one featured a parade and at least one noteworthy participant. Among the march-

ers was Amos Alonzo Stagg, football coach at the University of Chicago and proponent of physical culture. Stagg also served as a referee.

Thompson later congratulated himself in Main 13 on the use of school playgrounds by the police-athletes in training: "I could not repress a smile when I thought of how it was regarded to be an extravagant waste of money when as an alderman I pushed through the city council an ordinance appropriating \$1,200 for our first public playground, located at 12th and Wabash Avenue, and indeed the first in America." With a force that was 97 percent white, Thompson skipped what he told other audiences. Police might not want to read that the playground also showed Thompson had the needs of black Chicago at heart.¹⁴

The participants endured their tugs-of-war and hundred-yard dashes with seeming good humor. They performed for Thompson in recognition of his new attitude on working conditions. Gone were the 365-days-a-year work schedule, 24-hour duty every third day, and the discretionary authority of captains to grant sick pay. Thompson also allowed pay raises; the \$1,320 salary of 1917 (and for that matter, 1912) had risen to \$1,800 by 1920. While it lagged behind inflation, the new pay scale allowed the one-time antagonist of municipal unions to appear as though he cared.¹⁵

Money had a way of healing old wounds. In 1914 Chicago teachers made \$1,500; by 1922, when Thompson wanted the Chicago Teachers' Federation on his side, they were up to \$2,500. Superintendent Peter Mortenson further assisted by reviving a proposal from Ella Flagg Young on advisory teacher councils. Mortenson established grammar and high school councils for the 1921–22 school year. Local councils met every five weeks—on school time—and elected delegates to group councils. These in turn deliberated—also on school time—and selected members for the central council that met with the superintendent every five weeks. Issues ranged from salary and working conditions to more classroom space for non-English-speaking students.

The councils gave teachers the sense that their opinions mattered to the administration. It was no small accomplishment in a system long wracked by controversy. When Thompson announced he would not seek reelection in 1923, teachers rallied behind Mortenson, who was essentially a lame duck. The group councils praised him for utilizing "the collective experience of the classroom teachers," and the CTF protested any planned removal of the superintendent. Four years later, Thompson discovered the full value of public employees as political allies.¹⁶

But he did not yet present himself as an unabashed friend of organized labor. Given the anti-union environment of the early 1920s, that image was

still too dangerous. The steel strike of 1919 marked the first in a series of management victories in Chicago; the Stock Yards were another. In 1916 packing houses offered wages that were barely a third of Department of Labor estimates for a minimum family budget. Conditions improved when the Wilson administration decided the Yards were a vital part of the war effort. In 1917 federal judge Samuel Alschuler was appointed labor mediator for the industry.

Then, in March 1918, Alschuler issued an arbitration award covering Chicago and ten other districts. Provisions included the eight-hour day and forty-hour week, overtime, a raise, and an equalized pay scale for men and women. Under government pressure, packers agreed to a three-year pact.¹⁷

War's end meant a return to the old ways. On September 15, 1921, industry leaders Armour, Swift, Wilson, and Cudahy announced they would not renew the agreement; instead, their plants would become nonunion. A spokesman explained the advantages of the "American Shop": "The companies simply refuse to treat with men who are not employees. It is our theory that if a man who formerly worked for the packing companies is smart enough and intelligent enough to speak for the men, there are plenty of men still in the plants who are just as capable to represent them, or even more so." The packers believed that the man with "no ulterior motives in adjusting grievances is even more capable as a representative of the workers." 18

Ten weeks later the packers instituted a wage cut that precipitated a strike by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workers. Some ten thousand workers stayed out, but the union could not stop the hiring of eight thousand replacements. When the strike collapsed by New Year's Eve, the packers refused to rehire many of those who thought they were honestly adjusting grievances.¹⁹

Even arbitration was tricky, as the city's building trades learned. Rather than risk total defeat by fighting a lockout, the seventy-thousand-strong Chicago Building Trades Council tried a different strategy. In May 1921 the trades and the Building Construction Employers' Association agreed to arbitrate differences. For a time it appeared that a Chicago industry prone to strikes finally would avoid one.

By the turn of the century, the building trades already were 75 percent unionized and the scene of considerable unrest. A dispute beginning in February 1910 threw fifty thousand out of work and lasted fourteen months. Already during Thompson's first two terms, labor disputes in June 1915 and July 1919 had resulted in industry lockouts.

For organized labor, contractors wanted workers to do too much too

fast in conditions too unsafe. Builders in turn sought to implement their Eight Cardinal Principles: no limitation on the amount of work done in the course of a work day; no restrictions on the use of machinery or tools; no restrictions on the use of manufactured materials, except prison-made; no interference with tradesmen during work hours; no prohibition on the use of apprentices; the foreman classified as an agent of the employer; workers to have the freedom of contract, with a joint board to determine wages; and employers to be "at liberty to employ and discharge whomsoever they see fit." ²⁰

Builders urged a wage rollback in January 1921 as the only way to revive construction. A lockout began in May after the trades refused wage cuts of 20 percent for skilled workers and 30 percent for unskilled. When both sides accepted arbitration, they selected Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis to settle the dispute. Famous for his \$29 million fine against Standard Oil in 1907, Landis enjoyed the reputation of a tough but fair-minded jurist. At the time of the arbitration request, he was about to retire from the federal bench to assume the duties as baseball's first commissioner. The demands on his time did not prevent Landis from issuing a detailed award in early September.²¹

While both sides sparred over wage reductions, the Illinois General Assembly conducted hearings on the Chicago construction industry. Chaired by downstate senator John Dailey, the commission held forty-four sessions from March through June. Commission and grand jury testimony caught the particular attention of the *Tribune*. The paper ran stories on union plasterers shooting craps and on a 1 percent union graft assessment for new buildings. Somehow, the commission's later recommendation in favor of collective bargaining escaped notice.²²

Meanwhile, Landis decided to redefine his duties as arbitrator. Following his selection, Landis informed both parties that he would consider work rules along with wage scales. He explained simply, "The big thing is to settle things right. I can't do that until I know the working conditions." His intent became clear when he issued his decision on September 7. Wage provisions alone constituted a major defeat for the trades: The pay of skilled workers was reduced 20 to 22 percent, that of unskilled laborers between 22 and 52 percent.²³

The *Tribune* called the wage readjustment "painful but necessary," and yet Landis was by no means finished. The eight principles begot nineteen points. Strikes were virtually outlawed; employers were allowed the limited use of workers regardless of the trade jurisdiction; and nonunion workers could be employed "until such time as union men may be ob-

tained." Landis had little use for employees who complained of the decision's anti-union bias: "The highest dictates of both morality and interest require that you adopt and adhere to this policy." The *Daily News* praised the "courageous decision of Judge Landis," which offered both "a reasonable reduction in the inflated wages of the workers" and "complete emancipation of the industry from vicious, monopolistic and restrictive agreements" that supposedly plagued it.²⁴

Two months later a self-styled civic organization began drawing attention. In November the Chicago Association of Commerce helped organize the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award. Members portrayed themselves as "a group of 179 of Chicago's leading citizens organized not for profit. Their sole aim is to see that the working conditions and wage scales laid down by Judge Landis as just are lived up to by both parties to the contract." Further, their actions would be free of bias: "The committee has no axes to grind. Its membership is drawn from every profession and industry. It is not allied with any faction or factor in the building construction business." 25

Daily News publisher Victor Lawson soon pledged \$20,000 to the group's budget. This kind of support endured well past the May 1923 expiration of the Landis award. Three and a half years later, Julius Rosenwald was convinced "it would be courting disaster to permit the committee to go out of existence." ²⁶

Under the direction of the printing executive Thomas E. Donnelley, the committee resembled a Who's Who of Chicago business. Rosenwald and Donnelley were joined by the likes of Sewell L. Avery, president of U.S. Gypsum (and who as head of Montgomery Ward in World War II yelled "to hell with the government" when told to settle a strike with workers); Commonwealth Edison's Samuel Insull; and Joseph T. Ryerson, a local steel executive. Despite protests otherwise, the group was frankly open-shop, as suggested by the absence of veteran social reformers Jane Addams and Graham Taylor. Both settlement house pioneers were experienced in mediating labor disputes, and they shared an interest in finding alternatives to strikes and lockouts. The Citizens' Committee had other concerns, such as a police force of seven hundred.²⁷

Although the CFL scorned Landis as "the \$50,000 Baseball Judge," the 1920s were a business decade. The *Tribune* authored the accepted view of the committee, as "representative of the [entire] city's interest in releasing building from the stranglehold of the selfish forces which have brought about building paralysis." Respectable Chicago voiced little concern over a group that ran its own trade school and imported labor to do open-shop work.²⁸

In the daily press, only the *Herald-Examiner* raised doubts. The Citizens' Committee would mean better conditions in the industry, "But only if it proceeds on a basis of absolute impartiality." The paper offered a working definition that the committee ignored: "You cannot put contractors out of business by fiat. This the citizens' organization recognizes. But neither can you put unions out of business by fiat. And that the new organization recognizes this is not so clear." This was the extent of the *Examiner*'s comments; anything more and some of the morning readership might defect to the *Tribune*.²⁹

It was impossible for Thompson to return to the old image of the probusiness mayor, hostile to striking garment workers and unionized teachers. Yet he could not yet claim to be pro-union without explaining his brother-in-law's membership in the Citizens' Committee. No one asked Thompson about it because in part he had come up with the necessary diversion. As the Citizens' Committee prepared to go public, the mayor of Chicago chose to speak out on a national issue. In football terms, the idea was to confuse opponents with some misdirection.

"To be specific," he wrote Secretary of Commerce Hoover in October 1921, "I favor the establishing in the United States of a Railroad Service Commission, to be elected by the people" with "the power to condemn or purchase and to take over the railroads in the United States and to operate them in the interest of the people instead of for speculators and private owners." Hoover initially had inquired about the city's unemployment policy. Thompson gave the secretary something else entirely: "You must surely realize that the solution of our country's economic problem lies in a radical departure from our course of the past six years." Public officials would succeed only if they adhered "strictly to the policy of 'America First' and renounce the interests of the fox-hunting nobility of Europe and their schemes which have for their purpose only one thing, and that is to make the rich richer and the poor poorer." 30

Hoover responded, "I trust that you therefore are making adequate provision for them [the jobless] in some other manner" than the local unemployment conferences he had proposed. The exchange did not provoke public comment from the White House. For all his reputation and administrative skill, Hoover served in the Harding cabinet solely out of political necessity; he was a reform patch on a mostly threadbare administration. And any problem with Thompson was Hoover's alone. Warren Harding seemed to have a soft spot for Chicago's mayor.³¹

Mutual admiration dated to the end of the 1920 convention. Although a supporter of Hiram Johnson, Thompson came around quickly: "Sena-

tor Harding's published declaration against entangling alliances with Old World powers and against compulsory military training for the youth of the land please me greatly." Harding probably did not mind the 367,000-vote margin he tallied over James Cox in Chicago. After the election, Thompson visited the president-elect at his Marion home. "I just proffered my services to the president-elect because I think he needs help in the big job he has before him," he explained. Help also could flow from Washington to Chicago.³²

Congressman M. A. Michaelson wrote the White House in June 1921 for precisely that reason. Michaelson was a Thompsonite upset over a \$2.9 million lawsuit filed by the *Tribune* against the mayor and four others. The city had paid out that much in fees to various real estate "experts" who appraised land acquired for public works projects. Michaelson called the suit part of the "ruthless warfare" to destroy Thompson and the Republican party in Illinois. Invoking "the interest of right, justice and a square deal," he asked Harding to acquaint himself with the situation to ensure that any federal involvement would be impartial.³³

Michaelson was particularly concerned with the district attorney's office and the collector of internal revenue. Two days later, Attorney General Harry Daugherty reported to Harding that he had contacted the district attorney "and advised him that it was not agreeable to this department or administration to have his office used in the [unspecified] manner complained of."³⁴

In addition, Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon spoke with Collector John D. Cannon. Harding was pleased with the results. "I do hope that our federal appointees will not be participants in a factional warfare on the one hand," he wrote Mellon, "nor will they be unmindful of their proper performance of official duty on the other." With an assist from the White House, the *Tribune* might have won a quick and—for Thompson—embarrassing victory. Instead, the suit dragged on for eight and a half years before the Illinois Supreme Court finally held in Thompson's favor.³⁵

Harding had at least one more favor to dispense. Thompson's personal libel suit against the *Tribune* was nearing its trial date in spring 1922 when lawyers for the paper contacted Attorney General Daugherty. *Tribune* counsel MacGregor Bond wrote, "One year ago I asked permission to read certain files in the Department of Justice that I might obtain certain information—if it existed—to use in the defense of the actions for libel brought" by Thompson. Bond argued, "It would seem that the *Tribune*, which supported the Government unselfishly during the war, thereby earning these libel actions, is entitled to facts which it knows exist and which are in the

custody of the government." He pressed "that under the law the people of the nation are guaranteed the protection and help of their officers." The *Tribune* was simply "acting within its rights and for the public good."³⁶

Bond and Daugherty met the next day. The attorney general refused to reconsider on policy grounds—he did not open Bureau of Investigation files for inspection, even by Congress. Daugherty added in a memo, "I also told him I would not promise to respond to a subpoena *duces tecum* in case the court were to issue one but would decide that question if the subpoena was issued." (A subpoena *duces tecum* requires a witness to produce documents relevant to a case.)³⁷

Daugherty's office had been refusing to cooperate since July 1921. Former senator Lawrence Sherman asked—both in person and by letter—to examine files that might pertain to the case. "The elements represented in the Thompson administration are of the kind that do not admit of compromise," Sherman wrote. "The socialistic confiscation proposed in the Thompson platform [probably from the 1918 Senate primary], the character of the state administration and its shameless disregard of public decency in public office" rendered accommodation impossible. Sherman's requests were denied.³⁸

Five months later, the Department of Justice refused the *Tribune* as it did Sherman. *Tribune* lawyers also had contacted William M. Offley, a former BI official, for a possible deposition. Offley replied he had no personal knowledge of Thompson. "Further, my reports were made to the Government in connection with my official duties and clearly confidential in this respect." Offley then contacted the Justice Department, where Special Assistant to the Attorney General A. F. Myers seconded his position. "His understanding of the law coincides with ours," Myers wrote in a memorandum. Arrangements then were made for a New York federal district attorney "to designate counsel" for Offley if the *Tribune* persisted.³⁹

Yet a guardian angel, even of the White House variety, could do only so much. The libel suit ended in a mistrial. That setback was personal, the kind that did not threaten a politician's standing. Thompson had suffered a more serious defeat—the political, damaging kind—in June 1921, when his slate lost in the circuit court elections. Among other duties, the judges chose board members to run the South Parks system.

The parks were an important source of patronage. Thompson could have added up to 1,460 jobs to the ones he controlled in the West Parks (fluctuating between 683 and 1,074) and Lincoln Park systems, courtesy of Governor Len Small. Four months later, Thompson received yet more bad

news when Circuit Court Judge Harry M. Fisher dismissed the city's \$10 million libel suit against the *Tribune*.⁴⁰

"The end of the Lundin-Thompson tyranny looms in sight," the *Tribune* predicted after the judicial elections. Ordinarily, there might have been cause to celebrate. Defeat invariably chastened the ordinary politician—but not Thompson. His missteps indeed betrayed a flawed politician. However he pictured himself, as another Teddy Roosevelt or Huey Long, Thompson lacked the skills to make the transformation. His true talent lay elsewhere, as a political nesting doll of uncommon durability. Knocked down, he popped up again. Stripped of one layer, he found another. It was time for the doll to right itself.⁴¹

Michael Faherty assisted with an update on the activities of his board of local improvements. The report offered a litany of new sidewalks, sewers, streets, and alleys. If left alone (Faherty later argued for the firing of five hundred civil service employees so "then we could get somewhere" with better paving work), the board projected another \$53.5 million worth of construction. Picture-page upon picture-page showed city streets transformed, or about to be. At work was Big Bill the Builder, the first mayor lucky enough to exploit the Plan of Chicago.⁴²

Thompson wanted attention as the WASP who built, not the one who championed the open shop. Political attacks served a similar purpose, to show a blue blood with blue-collar sensibilities. Since 1919 Thompson had sponsored school field trips to Riverview Amusement Park. In May 1922, Louise DeKoven Bowen objected. The founder and president of the Juvenile Protective Association condemned the gambling and "filthy and indecent" penny arcades students might encounter. "A visit to Riverview is not an educational matter," she informed the school board by letter.⁴³

Thompson observed, "She is not for anything." Bowen ignored that "during the first year of my holiday for the school children at Riverview 250,000 copies of the Constitution were put in the children's hands." That was followed by 287,000 histories of the life of George Washington. "And last year 518,000 brief histories of the life of Abraham Lincoln were given out to the children. The increased attendance shows the parents are satisfied."⁴⁴

Thompson was right about the parents. Roller coasters meant as much to them as a workingman's concert. Bowen and other reformers completely missed the point, just as they did criticism of their work. "We like the maxim of the Polish Welfare Association," the *Chicago Society News* of the Polish National Alliance explained. "We want action and responsibil-

ity because it is an unselfish step forward to aid and protect our own youth." In Polish Chicago and other immigrant neighborhoods, the Juvenile Protective Association posed a far greater threat than a day at the amusement park. 45

Thompson had sensed yet another popular issue. With an equal interest in precinct captains, he could have maintained power indefinitely. But Fred Lundin handled matters of strategy. His success as campaign manager in 1915 led the *Tribune* to call him Svengali to Thompson's Trilby. Democrats and dissident Republicans thus came to believe they faced two opponents—Thompson the campaigner and Lundin the tactician. If true, Lundin could not match Thompson's skills. His failure in the June 1921 judicial elections exposed serious limitations. The nesting doll was hit more often than necessary.⁴⁶

Lundin's missteps also affected Len Small. Attorney General Edward Brundage had been fighting Thompson periodically for years. In July 1921 Brundage tried a different tack, with indictments of Small and Lieutenant Governor Fred E. Sterling for embezzlement of state funds. While state treasurer, Small allegedly deposited public funds in a friend's bank; Brundage claimed the arrangement cost some \$2 million in interest. A second loss, not treated in the indictment, concerned the attorney general's budget. Small had followed Lundin's suggestion in cutting Brundage's funding by \$700,000. The indictments followed.⁴⁷

However, Small's friends devised an ingenious scheme to influence the trial's outcome. "Salesmen" canvassed the homes of prospective jurors, who were given a photo album to browse through. The salesmen noted any response to a picture of Small; the defense counsel then used the reaction as a guide in juror selection. The jury delivered a not guilty verdict a month before the second Pageant of Progress.

Small's victory celebration was short-lived; hours after the verdict his wife died of a heart attack. Her death opened a new front in the newspaper wars, with the Hearst papers holding the *Tribune* responsible. Thompson later was quoted in the *Herald-Examiner* that he would "lick the lying newspaper assassins" who caused her death. The vow, though, did not interfere with politics. Thompson and Brundage would again be allies.⁴⁸

Entering the last half of his second term, Thompson held parts of a machine that he was incapable of assembling. Small had given him patronage that he failed to exploit. And the inability to control the South Parks Board cost more than jobs when Edward J. Kelly became president in 1924. Kelly caught the attention of black Chicagoans by handling park issues to

their satisfaction; as a Democratic mayor, he would encourage them to abandon the party of Lincoln. Thompson even faltered in his selection of diversions and new issues. Despite support from the Hearst papers, his district traction plan failed in the General Assembly. In the summer of 1922, so did his annual fair.⁴⁹

The 1922 Pageant of Progress opened with a six-hundred-float parade and the pretenses to match. There was a women's pageant of progress with a Joan of Arc and a Mary Queen of Scots and an International Radio Congress; a telephone hookup allowed for the regional broadcast of events. Sportsminded visitors were treated to an appearance by heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey on Chicago Day. But the pageant suffered from bad weather and a traction strike. This time Thompson did not mediate; conditions had changed too much from 1915 to allow for an easy settlement. So he operated four buses with banners proclaiming "People's Ownership—5 cent fare." Thompson transit, however, could not stop an attendance drop-off of nearly half.⁵⁰

The night before the pageant ended, 25,000 people attended a rally in southwest suburban Oak Lawn. With the crowd singing "Onward Christian Soldiers," this was more than an alternative to Thompson entertainment. It was an initiation that lasted from sundown until past midnight, with an estimated 4,650 new members swearing their loyalty to the Chicago-area Ku Klux Klan. The Klan had been active in the city for slightly over a year; approximately eighteen Klan organizations existed in Chicago and another twelve in suburban Cook County. Area membership stood at between 40,000 and 80,000.⁵¹

Since his Senate campaign, Thompson had compensated for a weak organization with strong appeals to blacks and, increasingly, ethnic groups. A day after the Klan rally a crowd of 40,000 gathered in McKinley Park on the city's Southwest Side to celebrate Lithuanian independence. These were potential Thompson voters and, like residents of the Second and Third Wards, would demand some kind of response to the Klan. Already by September 1921 Police Chief Charles Fitzmorris had announced a ban on wearing hoods at Klan parades. "Masks are all right in ballrooms, lodges or in other private places," Fitzmorris declared, "but they will not be permitted on the streets." 52

The Klan worried Fitzmorris more than it did the *Tribune*. Following the Oak Lawn rally, the paper ran the editorial "The New Ku Klux Klan":

The first Ku Klux Klan grew out of intolerable conditions in the south and passed away when the danger of Negro domination and the plague of the carpetbagger were lifted. It was born of an emergency and, while evils were com-

mitted in its name, it served an important end while contributing one of the romantic episodes of our history.

The new Ku Klux Klan has virtually the same constitution as its predecessor, the same grandiloquent titles and the same mysterious and melodramatic ritual. The first society doubtless chose these for their effect upon the Negroes, but we all like dressing up in costumes and disguises and keep enough of the boy in us to enjoy secret meetings and ceremonies. All the great fraternal orders, which accomplish so much quiet good throughout the country and mean so much in the social life of millions, make use of this natural liking for mysterious rites and secret ties, and the new Klan will hardly be denied the right to adopt the same policy.

Furthermore the objects of the society as stated in its constitution are commendable. We all owe a duty as citizens to support the constitution and the law of the land, and this duty justifies organization of citizens to give aid when necessary to the formal agencies and to create that sentiment of loyalty upon which the proper functioning of such agencies depends.

There were "sporadic cases" of violence ascribed to the Klan, "But the head of the order, we are glad to note, repudiates them and asserts the determination of the order to adopt lawful means only in the fulfillment of the Klan's purposes." 53

No other major paper shared that assessment. The *Daily News* and *Herald-Examiner* both were running Klan exposés that September while the *Journal* and *Post* published anti-Klan editorials. Three weeks after its first editorial, the *Tribune* reconsidered, because of "the historical association of the name with mob law and night murder." Criticism of a sort finally appeared in December 1922. The Klan was classified with those groups that "have in their naive enthusiasms the elements of disintegration." The best response was indifference, a proven "poison to many ideas." The editorial (titled, ironically, "Tolerance") emphasized, "Don't heat up the issue. Allow it to get cold." The prescription did not apply when linking Thompson with the Klan.⁵⁴

With Thompson undecided on a third term, the *Tribune* turned its focus on a city council committee investigating Klan involvement in government. Three of the five committee members were ethnic Democrats and the fourth a black Republican. Aldermen Mulcahy, Schwartz, and Walkowiak uncovered a Klan menace just two months before the mayoral primary; there were Irish, Jewish, and Polish voters enough to overlook the political timing. Above all in 1923, ethnic Chicagoans sought reassurance they were being protected—and worth protecting.

African Americans in the Second Ward expected the same from Louis

B. Anderson, successor to Oscar DePriest in the council, and they wanted something done about the fire department. The *Defender* had complained as early as April 1916 that "our citizens [are] waiting as long as 10 years to be a fire fighter" while "the foreigner is making it now." Five years later, the story had not changed: "The practice of segregation in Chicago's fire department must be destroyed. All the evils in the department can be traced to it." The *Defender* omitted the name of the public official ultimately responsible. If Robert Abbott hoped Thompson would respond on his own, he was to be disappointed.⁵⁵

Alderman Robert Mulcahy claimed, "I have 75 names of Klansmen who are city employees, at least 15 of whom I can prove are Klansmen." Mulcahy's committee focused on alleged Klan activities at a firehouse in the Austin neighborhood. The investigation led to a forced retirement together with several transfers and suspensions. At the same time Thompson's civil service commission was moving in the opposite direction. The commission cleared a nurse at the municipal tuberculosis sanitarium of reported Klan sympathies. Black voters who recalled the sanitarium's refusal to employ Dr. Roscoe Giles in 1917 were tempted to conclude a white employee was judged differently. Thompson avoided comment on both matters. ⁵⁶

The publicity probably influenced Thompson in his decision not to seek a third term; the Klan just did not make forceful inconsistencies very easy. With that, the issue of Klan members on the public payroll receded until after the spring elections. In May the corporation counsel ordered that two of the firemen suspended for Klan activities be reinstated. This time the city council, a new mayor, and the *Tribune* saw no reason to protest.⁵⁷

Like the Klan, Prohibition was an issue that could not be solved with pageants or parades. Throughout his second term Thompson treated the Eighteenth Amendment as the law of the land and primarily a police responsibility. Only later did he find that greater political advantage lay elsewhere.

Thompson had picked Charles Fitzmorris to succeed John Garrity as police chief in November 1920. At age thirty-six, Fitzmorris was the youngest chief in city history. The photogenic former Democrat appeared the ideal choice for a job Thompson already had filled three times. The department again declared itself reinvigorated, and this time the promise of change looked sincere. First came four weeks of gambling raids. An officer explained how with six hundred arrests, "The gamblers have found that we mean business. Every train takes some out of the city, most of them headed for New Orleans and Havana." Fitzmorris made more news with the suspension of fifty-five officers for lack of performance.⁵⁸

Other police chiefs found it easier to ignore conditions in the department and concentrate on breaking benefit societies or organizing Bolshevik squads. Fitzmorris was a more honest administrator. He admitted in September 1921 that "Reports and rumors reaching me indicate that 50 percent of the men on the Chicago police force are involved seriously in the illegal sale or transportation of liquor." Fitzmorris argued, as other cities would realize, "This department alone cannot enforce the government laws controlling the sale and distribution of liquor any more than it can enforce the laws governing counterfeiting" although it could sever "all connection with the illicit sale and distribution of liquor." With that, he transferred eight hundred officers. 59

Thompson did not anticipate Fitzmorris's candor, nor did he use the incident to condemn Prohibition. Rather, the mayor promised to "close the hellholes where liquor and moonshine are alleged and proven to be sold" in the city. It was 1921, too early for him to gauge voter sentiments on Prohibition; that would be left to his successor, an Irish Democrat with an unexpected commitment to the Volstead Act. In the interim, Fitzmorris made good by arresting 550 suspects in Prohibition raids.⁶⁰

Fitzmorris performed to the satisfaction of the Chicago Crime Commission (CCC). Established by the Association of Commerce in 1919 to make Chicago "a Newgate rather than a Mecca of the professional and habitual criminal," the CCC offered an institutional blend of reform and prejudice. The CCC noted the role of environment in crime and advocated a higher standard of living, providing that employers did not "overwelfarize" workers. As to data on the nativity of lawbreakers, the CCC thought American society was "much better able to assimilate the peoples of northern and western Europe than the Latin and Slavic elements." Still careful with the business community, Thompson did not care to disagree.⁶¹

His appointment of Fitzmorris paid off when the CCC issued its annual report in January 1922. Even with the massive transfers and the state's attorney's criticism on vice enforcement, the commission was sure the "honest, courageous and efficient" Fitzmorris would "give Chicago the best police force in America." Since a good police chief seemed to work, Thompson tried to repeat his success with another law enforcement appointment.⁶²

He called a city hall conference that January to redeem his "close-thehellholes" pledge. The meeting drew some sixty civic leaders, among them Howard Agnew Johnston, president of the Chicago Church Federation. Thompson readied his last appeal to WASP Chicago. "I am convinced that this government cannot endure by enforcing one-half of its laws," he said in a paraphrase of Abraham Lincoln, "and permitting the other half to be ignored. Either all our laws must be enforced or, ultimately, all our laws will be violated." To prevent the latter, he unveiled an official complaint form to protect against "the incompetence, discourtesy or neglect of duty of city employees [in] the remedy of wrongful conditions and the suppression of crime."

Also present was an English immigrant and Englewood minister, the Reverend John H. Williamson. Pastor and politician first met shortly after Armistice Day; Williamson had been curious about Thompson since the Joffre incident of May 1917. Williamson admitted that he was a product of Victorian society in which, he explained decades later in his autobiography, "class distinctions were as effective, as strong, and as enduring as jail bars." Although suffering "some hereditary shakes" about meeting someone higher up the class ladder, Williamson was so impressed after two meetings that he worked for Thompson in the 1919 general election. He was appointed law enforcement commissioner three weeks after the conference.⁶⁴

Williamson made a nonfiction Elmer Gantry; the crusade against crime had a nine-month run in Chicago before moving on to Zenith. In Woodlawn, Williamson told a Baptist audience, "Let the 10,000 criminals know that 25,000 organized Christians are out after them." A Chicago Law Enforcement Citizens' Committee was supposed to mobilize the righteous. When he touched on specifics, Williamson tended to be impolitic, like his criticism of gambling in the Second Ward of alderman and mayoral ally Louis Anderson. Moral reform zeal led Alderman William R. O'Toole to exclaim, "I'm off this administration and its sky pilot stuff." 65

By October Thompson was too. The law enforcement committee had generated less than half its membership goal of ten thousand. If he needed proof that WASP Chicago was no longer worth the effort, this was it. He also needed to discard a potential embarrassment. Williamson risked infuriating Catholic or black voters at any time. The pastor was a man of extreme views. "Speaking for myself," he commented sometime after his dismissal, "I could very readily state why a Protestant minister would stand with the KKK." One reason may have been the contribution made by Englewood Klan No. 2 to Williamson's Normal Park Methodist Church. 66

Thompson responded to this latest problem with his now-customary diversions. There were two—an attack on the *Tribune*'s ownership of Canadian paper mills "by the permission of the king of England" and the snub of another politician. A day after Williamson's dismissal, Thompson went to Detroit for a convention of the National Aeronautics Association. There he refused to shake hands with Detroit mayor James Couzens, who

had objected to his criticism of Herbert Hoover. But after nearly eight years of Thompson, the diversions had worn thin. They no longer amused or distracted Chicagoans as before. There was also a key defection to consider. The state's attorney had gone respectable.⁶⁷

Robert Crowe was another Maclay Hoyne in seeing the political potential of his office. Crowe began distancing himself from Thompson when Charles Fitzmorris admitted problems with Prohibition enforcement; the state's attorney soon promised his own vice crusade. Then, in January 1923, a school graft scandal broke, and Thompson's opposition finally was allowed to taste victory. A day before the indictment of Fred Lundin and others, Thompson announced he would not run for a third term.⁶⁸

Chicago looked as though it might be ready for reform, especially after respectable candidates won in both mayoral primaries. The *New York Times* feigned shock at the news of Thompson's stepping down: "Chicago was not worthy of him. He will not seek another re-election. He was late in coming to his cruel decision." The *Herald-Examiner* was more forgiving and accurate in the most literal sense: "Chicago in its entire history has had no such constructive mayor as Mr. Thompson." Regardless of the editorial slant, Chicago was granted a respite from William Hale Thompson and his ever-evolving political images.⁶⁹

Clarence Darrow ensured that retirement was only temporary. As defense attorney for Fred Lundin, he secured a verdict few had anticipated. Lundin's trial began in June, a kind of retrospective on the Thompson years. There were four weeks of testimony on the doings of the school board, long known to be dominated by Thompson's closest advisor. Witnesses recounted the purchase of \$133 potato peelers, the collection of kickbacks, and the \$119,000 in doors and windows purchased from a firm controlled by Lundin and a nephew.

And yet Darrow never showed concern; at one point he found time enough to draw up a list of Bible questions for the *Tribune* to give William Jennings Bryan. (They included, "Did the sun stand still to give Joshua time to fight a battle? If the sun stood still, would that have lengthened the day?") Awaiting the verdict, Darrow told reporters, "If Fred Lundin or any other man in this case could be convicted on this evidence, made up of suspicion and cobwebs, then I would want to retire to a cannibal island where I would be safe." Lundin and fifteen others were found not guilty in a state-Darrow confrontation the *Tribune* likened to a fight between the comedian Fatty Arbuckle and Jack Dempsey.⁷⁰

For years critics had charged that Thompson was corrupt, yet when subjected to a court test, Thompson Tammany proved an illusion. Without a conviction to exploit, respectable Republicans were left with the specter of a Thompson comeback. If one series of events had overwhelmed his political style, another might play directly to it. Thompson himself sensed the possibility.

When the time came to leave behind some type of public record, he provided it in booklet form as *Chicago: Eight Years of Progress*. City departments quantified progress in sidewalks built, streets lighted, playgrounds equipped. The Board of Local Improvements determined that projects executed under Thompson were five times greater than those of Napoleon III and Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. The only fitting comparison was to antiquity: Augustus and Diocletian were but William Hale Thompson read back into time. However, the emperors of Rome were dead. Thompson was not, least of all politically.⁷¹

Notes

- 1. Chicago Daily News, Aug. 20, 1921.
- 2. Population figures rounded off to the nearest thousand from Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931), Population, 1:289–90. Suburban figures are the product of subtracting the Chicago population from the county population.
- 3. Chicago figures rounded off to the nearest hundred thousand from ibid., 290. Suburbanization in the 1920s is discussed in Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), chap. 10, and Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 74–90, 178–86, 330–42.
- 4. Zelosky ad in *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1926. The *Chicago City Directory* for 1913 lists an Evanston address for Ickes while the 1917 *Book of Chicagoans* has a Hubbard Woods address. The 1923 directory places Richberg in the city, the *Who's Who in Chicago*, 1926 gives a Palos Park address.
- 5. For immigration restriction in the 1920s, see John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1971), chap. 11; voter registration figures rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1921, 791; Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1925, 772; and Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1929, 740. Kristi Andersen notes the gradual increase in voter registration among ethnic groups during the 1920s. The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928–1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 88–89. For the Smith and Roosevelt revolutions, see Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952).
- 6. For the pageant, see Chicago Tribune, July 31-Aug. 14, 1921. The fair was operated by the Pageant of Progress Exposition, whose officers were Thompson

associates. Thompson's growing interest in Catholics is underscored by the presence of D. F. Kelly as pageant treasurer and board member of the Chicago Boosters' Publicity Club. Kelly was also a major fundraiser for the Archdiocese of Chicago. Edward R. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole: Cardinal Mundelein and Chicago Catholicism (Nortre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 133–34.

- 7. For the exhibits, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1921; for the pigeons, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1921; for Chicago Plan Commission activities, see "Annual Report," 1922, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS); for radio, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Aug. 1, 1921; for army and navy offerings, see *Chicago Tribune*, various dates between Aug. 1 and Aug. 15, 1921.
- 8. For Davis, see Chicago Daily News, July 30, 1921; for Badoglio, see Chicago Tribune, Aug. 10, 1921.
- 9. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 1, 1921; Chicago American, Aug. 15, 1921; for biographical information on Stuart, see Who's Who in Chicago, 1931.
- 10. Chicago American editorial, Aug. 1, 1921; Main 13 1 (May 1921), courtesy of Perry Duis. Fitzmorris once worked for the American as a reporter. William H. Stuart, The Twenty Incredible Years (Chicago: M. A. Donahue, 1935), 141.
 - 11. Main 13 1 (May 1921).
 - 12. Ibid.
 - 13. Main 13 covers for May 1921, Oct. 1922, and Christmas 1922.
- 14. For Police Field Day, see Main 13 2 (Oct. 1922); for the racial composition of the police force, see Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 253.
- 15. James W. Errant, "Trade Unionism in the Civil Service of Chicago, 1895–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 113–17.
- 16. For pay figures, see ibid., 28–29; for teacher councils and support of Mortenson, see Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 139–41. The council and union actions were separate.
- 17. Robert A. Slayton, Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), chap. 4.
 - 18. James G. Condon quoted in Chicago Tribune, Sept. 15, 1921.
- 19. Howard Barton Myers, "The Policing of Labor Disputes in Chicago" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1929), 885–89.
- 20. For the arbitration announcement, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 1921; for background on trades, see Royal E. Montgomery, *Industrial Relations in the Chicago Building Trades* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 3, 17, 28, 237; for Thompson-era lockouts, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1915, July 19, 1919; for Cardinal Principles, see Building Construction Employers' Association of Chicago newsletter, Feb. 1921, CHS.
- 21. For suggested wage rollback and lockout, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 25, 1921, May 1, 1921; for Landis selection, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 1921. The wage

reductions were from \$1.25 down to \$1.00 an hour for skilled labor and from \$1.00 down to \$.70 for unskilled labor.

- 22. For a summary of Dailey commission activities, see Chicago Daily News, June 30, 1921; Chicago Daily News, Mar. 26, 1921, Mar. 28, 1921, Apr. 1, 1921; Chicago Tribune, Apr. 12, 1921, Apr. 16, 1921; for craps, see Chicago Tribune, May 13, 1921; for graft assessment, see Chicago Tribune, May 22, 1921; copy of Report of Illinois Building Investigation Commission (authorized by the Fifty-Second General Assembly, 1921) file 53, Victor Olander Papers, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago. Later, the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award would assess builders 1 percent of the value of work done to defray the group's costs. The Chicago Tribune did not consider this graft. Montgomery, Industrial Relations, 293.
- 23. For Landis on doing right, see Montgomery, *Industrial Relations*, 242n; for the award provisions, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 8, 1921.
- 24. Chicago Tribune editorial, Sept. 9, 1921; for the nineteen points, see Montgomery, Industrial Relations, 246-47; for the nonunion allowance, see Montgomery, 248; for the Landis directive, see Montgomery, 256; Chicago Daily News editorial, Sept. 8, 1921.
- 25. For background on the Citizens' Committee, see Montgomery, Industrial Relations, 275-76; Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award, Your Opportunity to Perform a Great Service to the Community, CHS.
- 26. Copy of Victor Lawson to James A. Patten, Feb. 14, 1922, outgoing personal correspondence, Victor Lawson Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago; copy of Julius Rosenwald to Thomas E. Donnelley, Dec. 17, 1926, box X, Citizens' Committee–Landis file, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

There was some attempt to include building-material suppliers as villains responsible for conditions. Newspaper accounts and the Dailey commission both noted unfair pricing tactics. Still, most attention, particularly that of the Citizens' Committee, focused on the building trades.

- 27. For the membership list, see Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award, Your Opportunity; Avery quoted in Richard Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941–1945 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972), 174; for labor views of Jane Addams and Graham Taylor, see Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 110–19, and Louise C. Wade, Graham Taylor: Pioneer for Social Justice, 1851–1938 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 109–10, 144–45, 202–3; for the denial of open-shop bias and for the police force, see Montgomery, Industrial Relations, 276–81.
- 28. For the CFL charge, see *New Majority*, Sept. 24, 1921; *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1921. The \$50,000 referred to Landis's salary as commissioner.
 - 29. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Nov. 14, 1921.
 - 30. Copy of Thompson to Hoover, Oct. 21, 1921, box 10, folder 76, John Fitz-

patrick Papers, CHS. Brother-in-law William Pelouze was not the only Thompson associate belonging to the committee. Others included Samuel Insull and D. F. Kelly.

- 31. Chicago Tribune, Nov. 8, 1921.
- 32. For Thompson's assessment, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1920; for the meeting, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 13, 1921.
- 33. Michaelson to Harding, June 27, 1921, Andrea D. Lentz, ed., Warren G. Harding Papers (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society Archives and Manuscripts Division, 1970), Presidential Case File, Illinois, reel 195.
- 34. Daugherty to Harding, June 29, 1921, Lentz, *Harding Papers*, Presidential Case File, Illinois, reel 195.
- 35. Mellon to Harding and Harding's response, both July 6, 1921, Lentz, *Harding Papers*, Presidential Case File, Illinois, reel 195. None of the correspondence indicates exactly what the district attorney and revenue collector had done or been asked to do concerning the case. For the reversal, see Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 320.
- 36. Bond to Daugherty, Mar. 24, 1922, case file 220285-5, Department of Justice Central Files, RG 60, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- 37. For a summary of the meeting and Daugherty's memo, see case file 220285, Department of Justice Central Files.
- 38. Daugherty to Sherman, July 29, 1921, item 220285–1, Department of Justice Central Files; Sherman to Daugherty, Aug. 1, 1921, item 220285–2, Department of Justice Central Files. Sherman later wrote Harding, "The black [population] is afflicted in Chicago with blatant agitators who preach social amalgamation as the goal of progress." Sherman to Harding, Oct. 31, 1921, Lentz, *Harding Papers*, Presidential Personal Files, reel 230.
- 39. Copy of Offley to Bond, Jan. 28, 1922, case file 220285–3, Department of Justice Central Files; Offley to Myers, Jan. 30, 1922, case file 220285–3, Department of Justice Central Files.
- 40. For job figures, see West Parks Commissioners, "Annual Report," 1921–22, and South Parks Commissioners, "Annual Report," year ending Feb. 18, 1922; for the libel suit, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1921. According to the *Chicago Tribune* of December 10, 1920, Small gave Thompson patronage control over the parks and several other state agencies operating in the city. The park systems were not known for their zeal in enforcing civil service protection.
 - 41. Chicago Tribune, June 8, 1921.
- 42. Board of Local Improvements, "Report of the Board of Local Improvements," July 30, 1921; for Faherty's remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1922.
 - 43. Chicago Tribune, May 23, 1922.
 - 44. Chicago Tribune, May 25, 1922.
- 45. Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey (Chicago: Works Progress Administration, 1942), Polish, II./E./3 (Contributions and Activities, Crime and Delinquency, Crime Prevention); Polish National Alliance, Chicago Society News 1 (Sept. 1922), emphasis added. Poles were not alone in their distrust of public agencies.

Writing to parishes in February 1917, Archbishop George Mundelein (using the third person) promised he was "not going to desert the orphan children, he will not abandon them to the cold soulless care of the State.... If need be, he will beg from door to door for them." Mundelein preferred to build Catholic institutions that offered the same care as the state. Kantowicz, Corporation Sole, 23.

- 46. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 2, 1916.
- 4⁻. For the indictment, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 1921; for the precipitating move by Lundin and Small, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 197–98. Sterling succeeded Small as treasurer and used the same bank.
- 48. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 203-4; Chicago American, June 27, 1922; Chicago Herald-Examiner, June 27, 1922. After a civil suit was brought by Brundage, Small returned \$600,000 to the state. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 204. For the vow for Mrs. Small, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 16, 1923.
- 49. Kelly's role in defusing at least one racially sensitive issue is discussed in chapter 6. For typical Hearst praise of the transportation district plan, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct. 21, 1921. State (and, later, U.S.) senator Otis F. Glenn charged the plan was as radical as anything proposed by Emma Goldman or Alex Berkman. *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1921.
- 50. For the parade, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1922; for the women's pageant, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1922; for the radio broadcast, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 8, 1922, Aug. 9, 1922; for Dempsey, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 15, 1922. A paper by Marchese Marconi probably was read by someone other than the inventor; Charles Steinmetz did appear for a speech. For the strike, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1922, Aug. 3, 1922. Pageantgoers were also offered rides from downtown by truck and automobile. See *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 4, 1922. Thompson avoided the role of mediator because it risked offending one or both sides—workers who were not as compliant as in 1915 or Samuel Insull, who controlled the elevated lines and did not want a political ally involved in a labor victory.
- 51. For the Klan rally, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 20, 1922; for background on the Chicago Klan, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 1915–1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), chap. 8.
- 52. For the park rally, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 21, 1922; for Fitzmorris's ban, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1921.
 - 53. Chicago Tribune, Aug. 27, 1921.
- 54. Chicago Daily News and Chicago Herald-Examiner stories, various dates, Sept. 1921; Chicago Journal editorial, Sept. 17, 1921; Chicago Post editorial, Sept. 9, 1921; Chicago Tribune, Sept. 16, 1921; for tolerance, see Chicago Tribune, Dec. 6, 1922.
- 55. For the *Chicago Tribune*'s interest in the council committee, see Dec. 7, 1922, Dec. 29, 1922, Jan. 2, 1923, Jan. 3, 1923, Jan. 5, 1923, Jan. 6, 1923, Jan. 10, 1923, Jan. 12, 1923, Jan. 14, 1923, Jan. 24, 1923. Another continuing story that January dealt with the Klan in Louisiana. For the fire department, see *Chicago Defender*, Apr. 22, 1916, July 16, 1921.

The change in editorial focus did not mean the paper had become color-blind. In a story on Louis Anderson, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a photo with the caption "Thompson floor leader" and the subheadline, "Colored Floor Leader Sees Lucky Turn [in facing thirteen primary opponents]." Jan. 18, 1923. Anderson probably did not see himself as lucky—he had to satisfy his constituents without irritating Thompson.

- 56. Jackson, Klan, 107-10.
- 57. For fire fighters, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1922; for the civil service proceedings, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1923; for Thompson's announcement, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 26, 1923; for the reinstatement order, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1923. The nurse also was charged with inefficiency, but there was no follow-up coverage on her fate.

The way in which inaccurate history perpetuates itself was demonstrated in the Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine of January 31, 1988. A popular history column dealt with the Klan in Chicago during the 1920s and made much of the council committee; it missed the political tie-ins and at all times ignored the Tribune editorials on the subject. See "Way We Were: Under the Eerie Light of the Klan's Flaming Crosses."

- 58. For the appointment, see Chicago Tribune, Nov. 11, 1920; for Fitzmorris's background, see Stuart, Incredible Years, 141; for the raids, see Chicago Tribune, Dec. 6, 1920; for the suspensions, see Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1921. No less a Thompson critic than the Chicago Daily News praised the appointment: "Superintendent Fitzmorris enters upon his big task with the good wishes of all Chicago." Nov. 11, 1920. Not everyone approved, however. The break between Thompson and Fred Lundin may have begun over Fitzmorris; Lundin was opposed. See Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 199.
 - 59. Chicago Tribune, Sept. 25, 1921.
- 60. For Thompson's promise, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1921; for the raids, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 19, 1921.
- 61. For the establishment of the CCC, see Chicago Crime Commission, Chicago Crime Commission Bulletin, Feb. 15, 1919, CHS; for institutional views, see annual report, Chicago Crime Commission, Bulletin, Jan. 31, 1921.
 - 62. Chicago Crime Commission, Bulletin, Feb. 10, 1922.
- 63. For background on Johnston, see John H. Williamson, I Met an American (privately printed, 1951), 90; for Thompson's statement and complaint form, see "Statement by Mayor Wm. Hale Thompson on the Purpose of the Meeting of January 19, 1922."
- 64. On "shakes," see Williamson, An American, 18; for campaign work, see Williamson, 32; for the appointment, see Chicago Tribune, Feb. 10, 1922.
- 65. For the Woodlawn rally, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 6, 1922; for the committee formation, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 18, 1922; for the Second Ward, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 202-3; for the sky pilot remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1922.

There are definite parallels between the Methodist minister Williamson and his citizens' committee and Methodist minister Gantry and his National Association for the Purification of Art and the Press. Sinclair Lewis did research on his character in Detroit and Kansas City in 1925–26 and at some point may have heard about Williamson. See *Elmer Gantry* (New York: New American Library, 1970).

- 66. For the dismissal, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1922; for Williamson and the Klan, see Jackson, *Klan*, 99. Williamson's autobiography offers little on his vice crusade and nothing on his Klan sympathies.
- 67. For the attack, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 9, 1922; for the Couzens incident, see *Chicago American*, Oct. 9, 1922.
- 68. For Crowe, see Chicago Tribune, Nov. 6, 1921; for the indictments, see Chicago Tribune, Jan. 27, 1923.
 - 69. New York Times, Jan. 27, 1923; Chicago Herald-Examiner, Jan. 27, 1923.
- 70. For the testimony, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 8–July 10, 1923, and Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 209–11; for the Bible questions, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 4, 1923; for the cannibal vow, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1923; for an assessment of the trial, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1923.
 - 71. Board of Local Improvements, Eight Years of Progress (1923), CHS.

6

Reform Comes to Town

[Red Kelly commented:] That was the trouble with our last Democratic mayor, Dever. He was an honest man, but he didn't know the game of politics.

-James T. Farrell, Judgement Day

IN OR OUT OF OFFICE, Thompson thrived on publicity. What city hall once provided he now got from a place like Riverview; after all, his politics had for some time included an element of the amusement park to it. So he built a boat there, and some one hundred thousand people came to check on its progress. When the work was done, Thompson intended to sail down the Mississippi to the South Seas. The cowboy was now an explorer on the trail of *anabas scandens*, a tree-climbing fish. Along the way he would publicize Chicago as a world trade center.

"We'll convince the wild men of Borneo before we're through that Chicago has just what they want to buy," he promised well-wishers. While Thompson may have lacked the credentials to be a good anthropologist, there was no doubting his ability to draw attention to himself. He was an automobile accident personified, grisly yet perversely fascinating. On top of that, he had the unique ability to emerge intact if not unscathed from any political wreck. People of all types could not help themselves; they simply had to look. Secretary of Labor James Davis was among the curious attending the boat's send-off from Wrigley Pier July 5, 1924. And if his New England sensibilities did not permit him to stare, Calvin Coolidge nonetheless sent greetings.¹

Thompson was poised to fashion yet another image. The time had come

to exploit the extreme and outrageous. As usual, luck was with him. Chicago had elected a reform administration only to turn on it. The open shop and Prohibition left most voters cold—and dry. By the eve of the next election, Big Bill Thompson did not.

But 1923 belonged to other candidates. With Thompson out of the way, Chicago postmaster Arthur C. Lueder won the Republican primary in February. Lueder was a political newcomer who portrayed himself as the expert administrator. He was also little inclined to reach out to Oscar De-Priest and other disgruntled Thompsonites.

That decision proved costly as Lueder discovered the Ku Klux Klan made too good an issue to use just once in a political season. Rumors spread in black neighborhoods that Lueder discriminated against black postal employees and would appoint a Klansman as police chief. The campaign became so moribund—and the nature of Chicago politics was so changed—in other parts of the city that not even an appeal to WASP prejudices helped.

The whispering campaign centered on the faith of Democratic nominee Judge William Emmett Dever of the superior court. One flier advised non-Catholics, "If you want Rome to run our Public Schools and City Government, vote for *Wm. E. Dever*, Democratic candidate for Mayor. He is a Roman Catholic and a member of the Knights of Columbus." Both the formal and whispered efforts on Lueder's behalf proved irrelevant in a city increasingly non-WASP; Dever won by a 105,000-vote margin, with 6,600 of it coming from the largely black Second and Third Wards.²

Chicago now had a mayor who was Irish, Catholic, and Democratic, the third such combination in the city's history. Yet any anxiety among the city's remaining WASP voters was misplaced. The victor proved no more an agent of the Pope than Thompson did of Tammany. Dever was, however, a disaster as mayor.

His selection was a result of the "new look" Democrats adopted after Roger Sullivan's death in 1920. Now led by former schoolteacher George Brennan, the party wanted to attract the middle class, or at least not frighten it as badly. Dever seemed the perfect candidate. He had served four terms on the city council and another three as a judge on the superior court; the reformer and Congregationalist minister Graham Taylor had been one of his earliest supporters. Dever also had strong ties to the old Harrison reform wing of the party. Brennan found something else to like—Dever agreed that reform did not cut patronage. The party chief kept control of rank-and-file political hirings.³

Conventional wisdom had Thompson as the bad mayor, Dever as the good, only the respectable politician was not a success. Dever failed be-

cause Chicago's problems did not result from government corruption. Rather, they were part of the very fabric of the place. Chicago had become what downstate always wanted, a city with a decentralized government and factious population, and yet few could have predicted the actual level of conflict.

The situation demanded some type of conciliation between classes, factions, and races, but Dever gave Chicago reform and, with it, more conflict. "I want my administration to be remembered for something definite in the service of the city," he announced at his inaugural. In that, if nothing else, he succeeded.⁴

Three problems frustrated Dever throughout his term in office. None had an easy solution, and each demanded a distinctly political response he could not give, even at the cost of his mayoralty. The first touched Chicago's two ballparks within a week of Dever's inauguration. On the South Side a bomb exploded at the entrance of Comiskey Park; to the north, vandals ripped out plumbing at Cubs' Park. With the season barely a week old, the action likely was not so much fan- as labor-related. Recent maintenance work at both parks had been nonunion.⁵

The incidents helped justify, for some, the work of the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award. Although the arbitration agreement was to expire in May 1923, the group had no intention of disbanding. If anything, committee member James A. Patten thought the original ruling too weak: "Unfortunately, Judge Landis recognized unions."

Patten and the committee viewed organized labor much as General Philip Sheridan did Native Americans: the goodness of the foe was a function of the corpse. The situation did not easily allow a mayor to be an Irish-Catholic Democrat, that is, if he chose to let citizens' committees be. The one-time tanner and member of the American Federation of Labor did precisely that.⁷

The Citizens' Committee was active throughout the mid-1920s. Central to its efforts were a trade school and employment bureau. By April 1925, some seventy-five thousand tradesmen had been placed, one-third of them from outside Chicago. At one point the committee had imported so many workers that it faced a bill of \$43,000 in unpaid train tickets. The money for transportation, a police force, and riot insurance came from membership subscriptions and an assessment fee. Builders were expected to set aside 1 percent of the value of their contracts; those constructing hospitals, schools, or charitable institutions had the option of .5 percent or a simple contribution. By February 1925, the committee had spent \$2 million in its fight for the open shop.8

"The Citizens' Committee in Chicago is about the only effective protection against the materialization of the radical ideas promulgated in sinister and devious ways by the bolshevik disciples," reported *The Landis Award* newsletter. The committee fought organized labor on several fronts. There were dances for Landis Award tradesmen and their guests and worker identity cards for contractors to separate the right kind of help from the wrong. Work sites were protected by the committee's police force, which divided the city into patrol districts for surveillance. It was as if the American Protective League had sprung back to life.9

Committee chairman Thomas Donnelley downplayed the role of his police: "This force never attempted to match the slugging tactics of the unions." But Donnelley ignored the importance of publicity and indictments; together, they lessened the need for hired blackjacks. In May 1922, two policemen were killed after a bombing at a Landis Award worksite. The Citizens' Committee and the press responded immediately. "Up to now," the *Daily News* charged, "Chicago has pusillanimously lain down before the depredations of these bombing outlaws." The committee offered a \$40,000 reward, with the *Tribune* adding another \$5,000.10

State's Attorney Robert Crowe produced murder indictments within forty-eight hours of the killings; Fred Mader, president of the 71,000-strong Building Trades Council, was one of those named. Three months later, the *Tribune* described those "40 labor leaders, conspirators, bombers, sluggers, jury fixers and bribers in labor cases convicted" by Crowe. The state's attorney knew labor prosecutions would help erase the public's memory of his involvement with Thompson. Blue-collar convictions also made Crowe quotable in the white-collar press: "We now have an unprecedented building boom going on in the city, and I'm going to keep those men who throttled the building industry in Chicago so busy defending themselves they will have no chance to kill building." 11

The Citizens' Committee credited itself with \$400 million worth of construction in five years. On the list of Landis Award projects were the American Furniture Mart, the Edgewater Beach Hotel, the Pure Oil Building, and the Union League Club. Of equal stature were the participating architectural firms: Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White, successor to Daniel Burnham's practice; Holabird and Roche; and Marshall and Fox. Regardless of reputation, Chicago architects knew they were judged on a commission's cost, which depended on completion time. Architects were likely to see union tradesmen as a potential problem, like weather or subsoil. The Citizens' Committee looked to be insurance against delay.

The committee was popular in at least one area outside downtown. In

May 1922, the board of trustees for the University of Chicago voted a \$5,000 contribution to the group. Seventeen months later, at a meeting where "Prayer was offered by [trustee] Mr. [J. Spencer] Dickerson," the trustees gave another \$5,000. Among the trustees were Thomas Donnelley, Charles L. Hutchinson, and Julius Rosenwald, all members of the Citizens' Committee. Landis Award labor was used on such university projects as the medical and theology buildings and the Joseph Bond Chapel. The work carried two sets of symbols, Gothic and open shop. Interpretation depended on union membership.¹²

Dever made little effort to distance himself from the committee. In the spring of 1924, the *Daily News* sponsored an affordable-home building program; given the sentiments of Victor Lawson, the paper naturally used Landis Award contractors. Rather than avoid the affair, Dever appeared at a building site for groundbreaking ceremonies. A union man was supposed to know better.

The mayor already had risked antagonizing labor with his selection of A. A. Sprague as public works commissioner. During the Red Scare, Military Intelligence had watched Sprague's work as a grand jury foreman. According to Colonel Gordon Johnston, Sprague possessed "high character and standing," attributes that promised "decisive action" in a grand jury investigation of suspected radicals. Sprague later joined the Citizens' Committee. As public works commissioner in 1925, he broke a strike by the city's street laborers.¹³

Dever's second problem was, literally, his new school superintendent. William A. McAndrew had been a victim of Chicago school politics; he was fired for refusing to graduate the son of a book company official. The Loeb Rule was another part of the same problem: "Superintendents, teachers [and] principals in Chicago have been treated with that same high-handed, tyrannical manner of management that was given to me in Chicago 27 years ago," McAndrew wrote in *The American Teacher* of September 1916. "The act [the Loeb Rule] is not only tragic, the act of the Chicago board is not only cruel, but it is worse than that. It is stupid." The description would also fit McAndrew's superintendency.¹⁴

Dever made seven appointments to the school board during his first month in office. Reform, at least in a narrow, business sense, finally touched the system; five of the appointees belonged to the Association of Commerce. The new board in turn selected McAndrew to replace Peter Mortenson in January 1924. McAndrew may have raised some early doubts in an interview after his selection, when he refused to be called "Dr. McAndrew." The title was "an inheritance from the educational system of nations that

had aristocracies and nobilities. But we are a democracy. The people have entrusted democracy to the care of the schools." The new superintendent, however, treated democracy in ways acceptable to business.¹⁵

Initially, the Chicago Teachers' Federation welcomed back an old ally only to realize McAndrew had changed from 1916. In April he canceled the next session of teachers' councils. When he refused to reconsider, the city council voted 31-2 in protest of the decision. Former superintendent Mortenson advised caution. "The value of the councils is not so much in the nature of the recommendations *per se*," he wrote McAndrew, "as in the professional reaction on the teachers themselves and the spirit of harmony and cooperation induced." The advice went unheeded. McAndrew made his decision based on the bottom line. The councils allegedly took up one school day a year at a cost of \$150,000. Despite the city council vote, Dever refused to act. He did not want to break his election promise to take politics out of the schools.¹⁶

His move against the councils cost McAndrew the goodwill of his teachers; other changes alienated parents and organized labor. The board had been experimenting with two ideas that McAndrew decided to adopt as formal policy. Junior high schools dated to 1918, the "platoon system" to Ella Flagg Young. The attraction of the junior high plan lay in separating seventh and eighth graders from the younger students; the teacher then concentrated on twelve-to-fourteen year olds, considered to be in a crucial stage of educational development. The platoon was more a matter of practicality than theory—students far outnumbered desks in the Chicago school system. The platoon system, an alternative to constructing new facilities, was pioneered in Gary, Indiana, where school capacity was extended by having students change classrooms for different subjects. "If any plan promises after careful handling to make a dollar go farther without impairment of service," McAndrew reported on the platoon system, "I do not see how a board can in fairness to the city neglect it." 17

Not everyone shared McAndrew's view. A group of South Side parents sought an injunction to keep the Harper School from becoming a junior high; the changeover involved transferring younger students to more distant schools. For organized labor, the question of control assumed broader form. Anything from Gary, Indiana, suggested United States Steel Corporation; the platoon system was seen as a business attempt to tighten its hold on the lives of workers. The CFL warned that the schools would be made "over into a replica of the Ford automobile plant, pouring little children into the hopper at one end and grinding them out at the other end as perfect parts of an industrial machine." 18

The CFL also opposed the use of IQ tests, part of the junior high plan. "It is a monstrous thing to do to a child, to label him less bright than another, even if the tests are reliable, which is challenged," the CFL argued in its newspaper, *The New Majority*. "It smacks too much of the quackery of the efficiency engineer" and would lead to a caste system in the schools.¹⁹

A federation report on the schools concluded, "Man does not live by bread alone. The master passion of humanity is the desire for equality." That was to be met through a democratic educational system, but McAndrew found the CFL's definition unacceptable. At his recommendation, the school board adopted use of both the platoon system and the junior high.²⁰

The *Tribune* hailed the changes as "two of the greatest educational advances in Chicago in the last 40 years" and urged McAndrew to compromise on the teachers' councils. When it became obvious he would not, the *Tribune* ventured, "Schools are not steel mills. Chicago's children can be rightly taught only by the voluntary cooperation of all the force. A conquered teaching force will be worse than useless."²¹

But McAndrew disregarded all warnings. He was sure he could control teacher, parent, and labor protests. What mattered most to him was business support, which he sought by speaking the language: "The purpose of a school system is not to please us who are in it, but as with all public service corporations, to satisfy the customers."²²

When he asked for comments from business on the schools, McAndrew wrote the Association of Commerce under the heading, "Customers' Estimate of Service." The superintendent found an appropriate forum for his ideas (and conceits) in early 1926 when he introduced Chicago Citizens' Sampling Day of the Public Schools. The event took place at the Art Institute's Fullerton Hall before an audience of 302 public school principals. The program explained: "Here, now, are children selected by lot from schools chosen haphazard. An assortment of citizens who admit themselves to be of average intelligence has proposed a series of tasks which eight years of schooling are thought to have enabled these youngsters to perform." The process, though possibly dull, was supposed to show what people expected of the schoolchildren and what the students could perform. With "the spectators being all school-managers, you are sure to learn much of value by observing how your human output meets requirements, proposed by your customers." 23

"Customers" offering exam questions included the Association of Commerce, the Chicago Post Office, the Men's City Club, the Woman's City Club, and the Union League Club. The "human output" (or "specimens,"

as they were later called in *Educational Review*, a magazine edited by McAndrew) consisted of eighth graders from thirty different schools. Students were measured to standards such as those determined by an official for the Charles A. Stevens Company: "The community expects the public-school output to have clean clothes, clean teeth, clean hair and clean skin," and the children were so tested; the average score of 75 out of 100 may have been too low for a clothing retailer concerned with fitting-room etiquette. Over the course of two hours, students demonstrated knowledge in art and music appreciation, arithmetic, sewing (girls only), spelling, and problem-solving. The result ostensibly constituted "an appraisal of how well out of school and away from the help of affectionate and sympathetic teachers, the skills and habits cultivated in school can function." ²⁴

McAndrew later contacted John Fitzpatrick to participate in a followup Sampling Day. "You are a stockholder in the public schools," the CFL president was informed by letter. "The output should be brought up to your requirements." McAndrew suggested a slide-show presentation at which students would have to identify historical figures such as George Washington, Florence Nightingale, and Samuel Gompers. Fitzpatrick suggested a different approach.

"I will be glad to sponsor a test like this," he wrote back to McAndrew. There would be slides of the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* to determine if students knew how much money the papers cheated the school fund with generous leases on school property and "dodging taxes." Fitzpatrick then suggested five other tax-dodge slides, a picture of Ella Flagg Young for contrast and one to "see how many of the youngsters can tell if the Chicago Federation of Labor's declarations that the junior high school is a 'blind alley in education' was ever publicly challenged by those advocating the system." ²⁵

His superintendent's friends should have given Dever cause to worry. "He is waging a battle not merely for Chicago but for all the school systems of the country," the *Elementary School Journal* observed. "If teachers are going to prostitute their profession by reducing their public service to the minimum through outcry and intimidation, then the consequences are serious." According to the *School Review*, the Chicago Teachers' Federation opposition to junior high schools was based on the fear of losing seventh and eighth grade teachers "into that uncontrolled realm, the high school, where the high priestess of that organization [Margaret Haley] cannot dictate teachers' judgments and pronouncements." Both periodicals supported McAndrew, and both were edited by faculty members in the school of education at the University of Chicago.²⁶

The *Tribune* also derided McAndrew's critics, "certain radicals" who claimed "the school system is being molded by a capitalistic system into the manufacture of caste" and parents who worried "that their children were to be made into serfs." McAndrew had no such agenda. Rather, he was the champion of solid education. The editorial warned that opposition to the superintendent was "a good way to make the American heritage of these children the pick and the washtub." Unfortunately for Dever, editorials did not vote.²⁷

But a school text controversy could make up voters' minds. In April 1926, the *Defender* attacked *Community Life and Civic Problems*, a high school textbook by Howard Copeland Hill of the University of Chicago. Hill wrote that Booker T. Washington "tried constantly to make the members of his race dissatisfied with their one-room cabins so that they would change their shiftless ways and become industrious citizens." Hill also told the story "of an African Negro lad whose chief desire seems to have been to save enough money to buy several wives; that done, he would leave his job and let them work for him the rest of his life."²⁸

Assistant Superintendent William J. Bogan found the wives story "absurd, in bad taste and clearly out of place in a high school text." The University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park defended the work. Park thought the excerpts "just as true of the [black] race in primitive conditions as of any other race in the same circumstances." He had read the book in manuscript form and recommended to Hill that he drop the passages; however, Park was uncertain that Hill would "accept my advice on the matter." The school board took more direct action and contacted the publisher to make appropriate changes.²⁹

The incident contrasted how Dever and Thompson approached politics. For once the school board yielded to popular pressure, but Dever did not exploit the opportunity. Instead, Thompson was handed an issue of considerable political appeal: school books and the University of Chicago—worked for broader effect, they promised votes.

Six months later events showed that royalty, like textbooks, could be made into a political issue. In November, Queen Marie of Romania arrived for a four-day visit. The queen had become something of an instant celebrity during her tour of the United States, and she may have assumed the same would hold true in Chicago. She would indeed be the object of attention.

Even before her arrival, controversy arose over the matter of a proper greeting. The mayor at least had enough political sense to shake, not kiss, the royal hand. Still, the queen's presence left aldermen uneasy. With elec-

tions two months off, they did not seem eager to appear with an autocrat; only seven of fifty attended a city hall reception. Alderman Terrence F. Moran offered an explanation at once personal and political: "I lived in Ireland, and the tyranny of the kings and queens was one of the reasons why I left. There's hundreds of thousands who hold the same view. Count me out."³⁰

Judge Joseph David did as much for himself. The superior court justice refused to join a receiving committee that would greet Marie when she visited a Romanian synagogue on the West Side. "The Jews are being horribly mistreated by the Romanian Government—a fanatical, intolerant and persecutory government," David wrote in declining the invitation. His refusal drew praise from at least one quarter. "We are positive," the Daily Jewish Forward remarked, "that the action of Judge David has more beautifully and more proudly expressed the opinion of the Jewish population of Chicago than" the committee that invited the queen.³¹

The judge also indicated that he "absolutely" agreed with organized labor's stand on the visit. David was referring to a resolution passed by the Chicago Federation of Labor. The CFL protested "the subservience of American officials to Queen Marie, the 'royal' symbol of oppression and terrorism" for the masses, and promised "organized labor will do no homage to any potentate," especially one representing a government that persecuted workers.³²

Given the tenor of the times, the CFL in 1924 had changed the name of its newspaper, abandoning the messianic for something more sedate. The New Majority was now the Federation News. Yet monarchy was a subject to rekindle old passions. The Federation News granted that courtesy should rule in the reception of royalty, "But there is no need of kissing the dust before anyone." Organized labor was little taken by someone who dined with "Judge [Elbert H.] Gary, the adamant, illiberal and uncompromising steel king, a king far more powerful than Queen Marie or her royal consort, and Charles Swab, another king by virtue of his wage slaves." It was wise, the Federation News concluded, to remember the observation of Benjamin Franklin: "A nod from a lord is a breakfast for a fool." 33

Marie sometimes found it hard to get the nod. A group of five hundred protestors, identified by the *Herald-Examiner* as "rioting Communists," protested outside her city hall reception. The steel workers she encountered two days later on a tour of Gary did not carry protest signs; they simply appeared unimpressed, even surly. "Men, take off your hats!" one company official demanded. "Don't you know what to do?" 34

Although the stories in the daily press were unrelentingly enthusiastic,

they suggested the queen belonged more to the classes than the masses. Gowns, luncheon at the Lake Shore Drive mansion of Edith Rockefeller McCormick, a royal dinner at the Drake Hotel where the table service was estimated to be worth \$25,000, and (not least of all) a reception at the University of Chicago—this was not how ordinary people lived. The visit offered up a godsend of material for a demagogue to use. Thompson merely had to read the newspapers, or have someone do it for him. Given his performance in the months ahead, he seemed to have done both.³⁵

Dever might have better withstood the politics of textbooks and royalty had it not been for his third problem. And Prohibition might have unfolded differently had he kept on Charles Fitzmorris; the police chief understood the difficulties of enforcing an unpopular law. When Fitzmorris resigned, the *Tribune* offered uncommon praise for a Thompson appointee. The position of police chief "is the most difficult place in the mayor's cabinet, even in the most favorable of circumstances, and the circumstances with which Mr. Fitzmorris had to manage were far from favorable. Nevertheless, he leaves the office with an exceptional record of accomplishment."³⁶

Dever no doubt thought his new police chief was of the same caliber. Eventually, Morgan A. Collins declined bribes of as much as \$100,000 a month because he refused to be bought, at least by organized crime. Julius Rosenwald, though, was a different matter. A day after the *Tribune*'s editorial, Rosenwald met with Collins to offer the chief Sears-Roebuck common stock worth approximately \$200,000. All Collins had to do was enforce the law as Rosenwald believed right. Collins later wrote, "This agreement has been carried out as agreed by both parties, and I have received 1000 shares" of stock. Law enforcement entailed both hidden costs and benefits.³⁷

With his new police chief in place, Dever considered how best to approach the Eighteenth Amendment. He held a jurist's regard for Prohibition—a law, no matter how unpopular, had to be enforced. His first targets were the black-and-tan cafés, interracial nightclubs on the South Side. "These places are vile to the last degree," he complained. "I see no reason why a decent man should hesitate a moment to revoke their licenses." The three hundred arrests could have allowed Dever to declare the operation a success and Prohibition a duly enforced amendment; at the very least, they sat well with anyone opposed to integrated social activities. But Dever was not interested in appearances, and he pushed on. In September 1923, he brought together local, state, and federal authorities to coordinate further action. Again there were quick results, with police making eight hundred arrests in one five-day period.³⁸

The decision to attempt strict enforcement reflected Dever's temperament: The mayor was a reformer who had always rejected popular notions about his ethnicity. Where John Coughlin and Michael Kenna were identified as typical Irish politicians, Dever sought to make himself the exception. Bathhouse John and Hinky Dink stood for boodle, the protégé of the Reverend Graham Taylor for municipal ownership. Dever needed to be an Irishman even Henry Adams could accept.

Elevation to the bench was the next logical step—the former tanner and night-school graduate would prove that a Democrat dispensed justice as dispassionately as any WASP Republican. Prohibition provided yet another chance to show that ethnicity had been left behind. Six months into his term. Dever explained himself to a German Day audience at Municipal Pier. He denied that he was coming between people and their beer. "I am coming between them and their poison. Good beer is not being made or sold in Chicago now." He wished Chicagoans "could have good, wholesome beer at a moderate price, but the poison" available was not beer and not cheap. Dever then touched on his real motivations. "The poison has found its way into our body politic. It has worked itself into our city, county and state governments." He did not believe the police force was "badly corrupted" but in need of improved morale "until it is a real, honest agency" for law enforcement. Dever showed himself a true reformer, capable of seeing problems and taking unpopular stands in response. At some point, of course, the public would react to his policies. In that willingness to face defeat, Dever proved as uncompromising as a Merriam or an Ickes, and as politically inept.39

Unlike Dever, Thompson did not need to appear a WASP; he was from birth. And no one could blame him for being descended from Papists, horse thieves, or gamblers. For Thompson crime was simply a given, to be handled according to public outcry or apathy and—always—to be exploited for political advantage.

No one could have predicted that organized crime in 1920s Chicago would emerge as a big business, thanks to New York emigré Johnny Torrio. Arriving in 1908 to manage a number of houses of prostitution, Torrio moved steadily up the ranks of gangdom. Under his leadership, the Chicago syndicate grossed \$13 million a year from beer, gambling, and prostitution. Whatever his reputation (the press did not extend terms such as "visionary" and "genius" to gangsters), Torrio brought vice into the twentieth century. When he left Chicago after an attempted assassination in 1925, his hand-picked successor continued the work. Torrio saw Al Capone as a comer.⁴⁰

Thompson treated crime during 1921–23 in exactly the same way as his immediate predecessors. When the middle class demanded action, Fred Busse and Carter Harrison II did the expedient—Busse appointed a vice commission in 1910, Harrison closed down the Levee District four years later. Neither expected to rid the city of vice any more than Thompson—of the same political generation and mind-set—thought his law enforcement commissioner would. Thompson assumed that Prohibition was just another moral reform fad. If the past were prologue, voters would tire of vice raids, and politicians could focus their attention elsewhere.

However, technology virtually dictated that Prohibition would unfold differently. Automobiles, telephones, mini-distilleries, and that most potent of Chicago symbols, the Thompson submachine gun, forced change onto some of humanity's oldest activities. Vice was never so profitable or difficult and bloody to contain. Later, as they tried to explain what happened, critics largely ignored the manner in which crime had modernized. The need to personalize a phenomenon as overwhelming as Capone demanded the presence of heroes and villains. Before Thompson could be assigned his part, Dever performed in the role of Pyrrhus.

Dever's efforts at taking the oxymoron out of the phrase "Chicago reform mayor" attracted considerable interest. *The Literary Digest* took notice, as did the *New York Times*, which interviewed Dever under the headline "A Wet Mayor Dries Chicago." The *Atlantic Monthly* even gave him a byline for an article on Prohibition. Yet the publicity could not stem the growing image of Chicago as gang capital. The problem lay with Chicago police; they had become what Dever wanted, an aggressive law enforcement agency. Continued police raids forced Torrio to abandon the city in 1924 for west-suburban Cicero.

The Chicago syndicate then actually devolved, though few noticed. What had been a coalition (or, in a strictly business sense, a pool) became a fight for control of the city and Cook County. Gang wars were proof of Dever's success (or the consequences of market competition), although the press chased a different story. In November 1924, gangster Dion O'Banion was murdered in his flower shop on the Near North Side. Cardinal George Mundelein refused the former altar boy a Catholic burial. Still the crowds came to the cemetery, and the curious insisted on knowing.⁴¹

Chicago again appeared as it had in 1917–18, a place unlike the rest of America; only the type of war had changed. "Amid kingly pomp and splendor, Dion O'Banion, ruthless leader of Chicago gangland, gunman, beer runner, and hijacker was carried to the grave Friday by his associates," read an Associated Press story in the *Houston Post*.⁴²

Further violence brought additional stories and comment. "It is ridiculous to assume that a little group of outlaws can continue to terrorize a great community," said the *Post* after the murder of gangster Hymie Weiss two years later, "if the law enforcement agencies are efficient." In Atlanta the *Constitution* took a lighter approach: "Judging by the way they're being killed off, Chicago will soon be short of gangsters." For the national press, Thompson had become superfluous. Chicago now provided comment without the assistance of its former mayor, and the "best" of it—complete with editorial cartoons of Sicilian gangsters—made *The Literary Digest*. 43

Dever's Prohibition policies also threatened a schism among local Democrats. For New Immigrants, Anton Cermak functioned as the great hope of the party; to George Brennan and the Irish party hierarchy, he posed the biggest threat. Elected president of the Cook County Board in 1922, the Bohemian Cermak possessed both a powerbase independent of Brennan and an issue to build on. Cermak remained an unreconstructed wet. His election to the county board coincided with an advisory referendum on Prohibition. Countywide, legally selling beer and light wine won 552,000 votes in favor to 138,000 opposed. Candidate Cermak had helped to collect signatures to put the question on the ballot.

Party leaders were expected to keep quiet about Dever's Prohibition stand and hope for a change of heart. Cermak did not oblige. Instead, he complained, "The saloonkeepers thought they were doing no wrong in selling beer. It was understood there was an unwritten law under which government sanctioned the sale of beer. Prohibition officers never made arrests for beer selling, only for whiskey sales." When he upset that status quo, Dever alienated one of the ablest politicians in Chicago history. 44

Dever again summarized his Prohibition views at a party fundraiser in October 1924: "The laws are on the books, and I believe in enforcing the laws." Also attending was Clarence Darrow, who had supported Dever for mayor. "I like Tony Cermak," Darrow admitted to listeners. "I like him because he's wet and because he tells the world he's wet. He doesn't grab a foolish law and hide behind it, either. He doesn't say he enforces the law because they're on the books. He says he dislikes the law and makes no more excuses. I like him." Darrow then praised a particular kind of criminal: "I can't get a drink without going to the bootleggers, and I frequently want a drink. I thank God bootleggers exist." 45

Darrow's not-so-gentle reproach was wasted on its intended target. Dever would not or could not change. The longer he persisted, the worse his situation deteriorated. In April 1925, he sponsored a traction ordinance that included provisions for subway construction. The plan lost by 107,000

votes; Cermak, who ruled his Twenty-Second Ward without opposition or question, somehow failed to bring out a majority of voters for the plan.

The vote carried a message Dever chose to ignore. The next spring he testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Prohibition. Three years' experience and frustration with the Volstead Act brought the recommendation, "What we need is this: Patient, courageous, intelligent, tolerant study of the whole problem." Dever was about to learn that Chicago voters wanted no more study and no more Prohibition.⁴⁶

If misery loved company, Dever could have taken solace in that he was not alone. Thompson was having his own problems, starting with two and a half years of semiretirement. He was a politician in the worst of circumstances—out of office and little missed, at least by his peers. He busied himself with his fish endeavors, the South Seas expedition, and the Fish Fans' Club, a group he founded in 1922 "to urge and encourage the propagation of fish in American waterways." There was also his chairmanship of the Illinois Waterways Commission, a largely ceremonial post. Beyond that he had little.⁴⁷

Len Small was among those politicians who kept their distance. In a letter dated May 14, 1924, Small wrote that he wanted Thompson to "continue to give me the benefit of your judgment and advice in political matters in Cook County." But Small was not interested in rewards that extended much beyond flattery. After winning renomination for governor, he gave Thompson control of the West Parks Board only to change his mind within a week. Thompson also was stripped of influence on the Lincoln Park Board.⁴⁸

Small had made himself into a state-sized version of the former mayor; self-promotion was part of the image. When a college football crowd of sixty thousand assembled in downstate Champaign, Small knew what to do. He sent airplanes overhead with bottoms painted "Landing Fields/ Good Roads/Len Small/Nuff Said." To publicize his road building (a program totaling over \$100 million by 1925), Small ignored tables and figures for a puzzle. "Can you solve the problem of Illinois?" the caption asked. The solution was easy: "Follow the Hard Road lines and you cannot go wrong." 49

Opponents were free to dismiss the 102-piece (one for each county) jigsaw puzzle, but the 60,000-vote margin of Small's primary win over Thurlow G. Essington was another matter. "Small Seems to Have Won," the *Tribune* editorialized. The headline ran above several inches of blank space. 50

The paper probably could not bring itself to admit that Thompson's

politics worked well beyond Chicago and Cook County. Small built roads as public works; farmers appreciated highways just as Chicagoans did paved streets. Small also courted African Americans by appointing Edward H. Wright to the Illinois Commerce Commission. This was an appointment of considerable stature in the black community. Wright, whose bearing led to his nickname Iron Master, in 1920 became the first African American elected as a Chicago ward committeeman.

Small also followed Thompson's lead by appealing to organized labor. He vetoed a state military police force bill that provided for life appointment of the police chief and the power to make arrests without warrants; whatever else they faced in the 1920s, Illinois unions were spared having to confront a powerful antagonist free of public constraints. In addition, Small made such liberal use of his pardon powers that he earned the nickname Oh Pardon Me. Because it received a share of those pardons, labor did not complain.

Imitation may have been the highest form of political flattery, but the more he copied Thompson, the less Small depended on his old ally. A draft of the May 14 letter instructed Thompson he would "act as my campaign leader in Cook County." The passage was deleted from the final version. 51

For the first time in nearly a decade, Thompson found himself on the periphery of a presidential election. Further, he disliked the GOP ticket coming out of the party convention in Cleveland. "The nomination of [banker Charles] Dawes for Vice President is a great and splendid thing," he remarked afterwards, "for Wall Street and England." Rather than go along with respectable Republicans for Coolidge, he flirted with the third-party candidacy of Robert La Follette.⁵²

The attraction was mutual. La Follette's campaign manager, John M. Nelson, appeared confident that summer he could win Thompson's support: "There has been no word from Thompson himself, and I do not wish to appear to be quoting him, but it is just about certain we will have the support of the Thompson group." Nelson explained, "They are progressive, and their views are about the same as ours. It is only natural they would support us." 53

Nelson even sounded Thompson-like at La Follette's nominating convention. He asked, "What was it but the progressive spirit that impelled George Washington and our fathers to declare their independence from the tyranny of George III, a figurehead representing the forces of special privilege?" With the nation's capital seemingly full of those forces, the campaign located its headquarters in Chicago. La Follette hoped the move would attract German and African-American support, though he lacked

Thompson's confidence in black voters. La Follette wrote Nelson, "Just a word of warning on the negro end of the situation. Anyone you contact with must be thoroughly investigated as their race is full of political shysters." ⁵⁴

Back from his South Seas adventure (which he quit before his boat reached New Orleans), Thompson revealed he had been approached to run for the U.S. Senate. He declined on the grounds that he was having "too good a time" in general and was busy planning a banquet publicizing his inland waterway project. More likely, he did not enjoy the prospect of certain defeat. It was better to be an outcast Republican than a third-party turncoat.

That status did not change soon after the 1924 elections; the former mayor was of little political value for another year. Despite offering a petition bearing two hundred thousand signatures, Thompson could not get Small to force Fred Lundin to share his patronage power in Cook County. Lundin's trial had caused a rift between former mayor and advisor that Small did not move to close. Thompson bided his time publicizing inland waterways, hard roads for Cook County, and fish hatcheries for Illinois lakes and rivers; his wealth allowed him the luxury of waiting. Reprieve finally came by way of Republican factional politics.⁵⁵

The 1926 party primary found two sets of Thompson antagonists supporting different tickets. The most interesting contest involved the senate seat of William B. McKinley. A utilities magnate from downstate Champaign, McKinley had the support of Charles Deneen (elected to the Senate in 1924), Small, and Lundin. State's Attorney Robert Crowe preferred Frank L. Smith, chairman of the Illinois Commerce Commission. The situation was so convoluted that former attorney general Edward Brundage found himself supporting McKinley statewide and Crowe locally.

Brundage and Crowe particularly wanted control of such county offices as sheriff and treasurer. To get it, Crowe approached Thompson friend George Harding to run as county treasurer. Despite a long association with Thompson (including service as city comptroller), Harding was a respected politician who enjoyed especially strong support among African Americans on the South Side. He had been Second Ward alderman, a financial backer of heavyweight fighter Jack Johnson, and that rarest of individuals—a white landlord popular with black tenants. Harding accepted on the condition that Crowe support Thompson for mayor in 1927. Crowe agreed, and from expedience a comeback began.⁵⁶

Political necessity required Brundage to overlook his prosecution of Len Small, and it demanded the same of Thompson. During the 1924 prima-

ry, he said, "Anytime you'll find I'm in the same political bed with Bobby Crowe, . . . Ed Brundage who was the cause of killing Governor Small's wife, the *Chicago Tribune*, profiteering from Canadian free lands for their pulp paper, and their Medill McCormick . . . , then you'll know that Bill Thompson has turned out to be a crook." As he had before, Thompson bulled his way through another inconsistency.⁵⁷

Thompson did not disappoint his new political associates. To give the county slate greater exposure, he negotiated a campaign appearance by Senator William E. Borah. Thompson wrote the veteran isolationist to suggest "a speech at either a banquet or mass meeting against foreign entanglements and how to keep Old Glory at the masthead, if by that time we have not been voted into the World Court, or how to put Old Glory back" should the Senate approve Court membership. 58

Borah accepted—the appearance was set for Washington's Birthday—although he remained cautious. He refused to speak on local issues and had to be persuaded to appear at the Coliseum. "Am sure could not possibly reach the crowd and the meeting would be a disappointment," advised Borah in a telegram to Thompson. "A lesser capacity hall would be more desirable." ⁵⁹

Thompson expertly handled the senator's qualms. "Everything set in Chicago," he telegraphed Borah in Washington a day before his arrival. Arrangements included a 2,500-automobile parade, special trains bringing in 1,200 listeners from downstate, and "three super power radio stations" to broadcast the speech. "Chicago will greet you as America's new Paul Revere." Thompson delivered as promised, and suddenly the Coliseum appeared more inviting.⁶⁰

"We have many great problems," Borah told fifteen thousand listeners, but the problem most vital to the happiness and to the perpetuity of our American institutions, the policy most essential to peace and justice throughout the world is the preservation of the policies bequeathed by George Washington." Borah also noted that "while there may be places where one would need to apologize for reading the Farewell Address of George Washington, thank God it is not in Illinois." The *Tribune* praised Borah and his Senate allies "now preparing public opinion for a withdraw-al" from the World Court issue. However, the paper did not comment on Thompson, who shared the dais and received a ten-minute ovation from the Coliseum audience.⁶¹

Later in the campaign Thompson appeared with Minnesota Senator Henrik Shipstead at some North Side rallies. Audiences were treated to two distinct speaking styles. Shipstead sounded the sincere if conspiracy-prone isolationist: "Elihu Root and the forces he represents intended this [World] court to be one of the most potent agencies in the world for controlling the masses. He said so with almost astonishing frankness, time and time again, in the meetings of his Carnegie endowment." 62

Thompson approached his audience almost from a different dimension. He wanted to entertain, attack, and arouse in equal measure:

With your help, my friends, we will fix it so that Mr. McKinley can spend all of his time with the king if he wants to. And there is another thing. In the World Court, John Bull has seven votes while Uncle Sam has but one. It is the first time that I have ever known an Englishman was better than an American.

Why, according to that, it would take seven Americans to equal one Englishman. Why?

I can't see it. Where is the Englishman who can beat Jack Dempsey? Let Deneen and McKinley bring him on if they can find one. Where was there ever a Britisher who could knock out Jim Corbett or [James] Jeffries? If there ever was one, let Deneen and McKinley step out and name him. They just can't do it, that's all.

Thompson reduced a complex foreign policy issue down to its simplest terms—John Bull, Uncle Sam, Jack Dempsey. An undecided voter could either read the *Tribune* for a detailed justification of America First or listen to Big Bill Thompson for the political cartoon version.⁶³

The former mayor was back in politics, but something had changed. This Thompson was unlike the others—he was fatter (the onetime athlete verged on 250 pounds) and he made no attempt to curb his rhetoric. Thompson had become the total demagogue. A political performer above all else, he put this latest act on stage at the Cort Theatre downtown in early April. The Cort was booked for a "debate" between Thompson and former allies Fred Lundin and John Dill Robertson. Because they really did not need to be present, Thompson was more interested in finding appropriate substitutes. He settled on two caged rats, the one named "Fred," the other "Doc." The exchanges were decidedly one-sided.⁶⁴

The *Daily News* rationalized, "His rat circus . . . helps the Chicago public more accurately to gauge the kind of man who for eight years allowed his political playmates to burrow like rats into that succulent prize, the municipal government of Chicago." Voters took notice in a way the *Daily News* did not anticipate—Thompson helped his allies capture nominations for nine out of ten major county offices. The retirement had ended.⁶⁵

A *Tribune* story unintentionally caught the essence of Thompson's new approach—"two big rats from the stock yards" had been used in the per-

formance. The remarks to "Doc" and "Fred" were not intended for a self-consciously respectable audience. They went out to people whose lives had been portrayed by Upton Sinclair and whose station had improved only fitfully in the twenty years since *The Jungle* first appeared. Thompson played to resentments so deep that he did not have to reconcile the outrageous with the reasonable. That became the worry of Borah, Shipstead, and—when he introduced Thompson at a downtown rally for Frank Smith—Harold Ickes.⁶⁶

Thompson issued a victory statement in the *Herald-Examiner* that doubled as a missive to publisher William Randolph Hearst: "It is my belief it is due to Mr. Hearst and his ideals and his tremendous power in speaking daily through his publications to 20 million people that this great nation we love so much is spared the yoke of foreign oppression." The election results showed "Real Americans owe William Randolph Hearst and all others who assisted in Tuesday's victory a lasting debt of gratitude." Thompson intended to harness some of Hearst's "tremendous power" when he announced his candidacy for mayor. First, though, he had to testify before a Senate committee come to Chicago.⁶⁷

The Committee on Privileges and Elections was hearing testimony on the spring primary. The most notable witness was Samuel Insull of Commonwealth Edison and Middle West Utilities. Insull admitted that he had spent \$33,735 during his primary campaign to oppose the World Court. "I am very much opposed," he said, "as a citizen to a country with such a heterogeneous population as we have in this country being mixed up with European affairs generally—very much opposed to it." 68

For an English immigrant who headed the wartime Illinois State Council of Defense (and who would flee to Greece in 1932 to escape extradition on charges of mail fraud after the collapse of his Middle West holding company), xenophobia seemed out of place. As a cover for other expenditures, it failed altogether.

Insull belonged to the line of American business tycoons that periodically captures the public imagination. He was a descendant of Gould and Rockefeller, a parent to Boesky and Trump. He operated as the great popularizer of electricity who, by the eve of the Depression, would control utilities that generated one-eighth of the nation's electricity. To the novelist John Dos Passos, Insull was Power Superpower. The reform critic Donald Richberg accused him of being a "gold-plated anarchist." And for Harold Ickes, Insull made a good investment. A few weeks' speculation in Middle West Utilities's stock netted Ickes \$50,000 in 1928.⁶⁹

The Senate committee learned how this enterprising dynamo did busi-

ness—Insull gave \$125,000 to the Senate campaign of Frank Smith and another \$15,000 to George Brennan, winner in the Democratic primary. Thompson—always an Insull favorite—was not denied his share of the windfall; he received a contribution of \$25,000, according to Smith campaign manager Allen F. Moore, "for halls, bands and like expenses." In all, Insull spent some \$239,000 on the primary. Smith chaired the Illinois Commerce Commission, which set utility rates throughout the state. The contribution appeared to be Insull money spent for services rendered and favors to come. Ultimately, the revelations ruined Smith's career. He defeated Brennan in the general election only to be denied his seat in the Senate.⁷⁰

Thompson fared considerably better. He testified that he had come out of retirement because "I was very much interested in the principles of Frank L. Smith." The testimony did nothing to ignite the controversy detractors may have wanted. For years they had pointed to the Insull-Thompson relationship. Insull was possibly his largest contributor, and Thompson's corporation counsel, Samuel Ettleson, had been a law partner with a close Insull advisor, Daniel F. Schuyler. Chicago reformers always thought the evidence was sufficient to label Thompson a front for the utilities. The public was more forgiving.⁷¹

Thompson relaxed at San Simeon shortly before his committee appearance. "Hearst's ranch is a wonder," he wrote to his former law enforcement commissioner, the Reverend John Williamson. The property consisted of 175,000 acres, 30 miles of ocean front, 11,000 cattle, and three more houses under construction. "Thirty guests here now, and 40 more coming for the weekend. Dining room can accommodate 100. Having a good time. Weather fine and think I will get all I came after."

At the least, Thompson sought favorable publicity, which Hearst could provide in San Francisco as easily as in Chicago. The Hearst image of Thompson in the San Francisco Examiner was unlike anything from the Tribune or the Daily News. Here was a "captivatingly democratic, readywitted and far-visioned type of American who puts his country above all other things and holds sturdily that the power of a minority made up of foreign and domestic financial interests should not control both political parties."⁷³

The same kind of support appeared in the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*. An editorial on Thompson's committee appearance noted, "The reader can hardly avoid the conclusion that from the day's testimony the figure of Thompson is the only one to emerge without dirt on it." A successful dem-

agogue depended on the rationalizations of a newspaper or two. Thompson found his through Hearst.⁷⁴

At age fifty-nine, Thompson was a most fortunate politician, returned from political oblivion. He also was set to become the complete demagogue, a political evolution that caught observers by surprise. Ready to declare for mayor, Thompson visited Minneapolis in October 1926. He had never given up the idea of national office. Campaigning for Minnesota's Farmer-Labor ticket, he hoped, might lead to bigger things.

Thompson called for a lakes-to-gulf waterway during his appearance; if one set of public works benefited him as mayor, another might as senator or president. But the *Minneapolis Tribune* was not impressed. The paper countered with an attack based on old notions. And "along comes Boss Thompson, erstwhile dictator of Chicago, who hopes to be dictator again. . . . The Illinois metropolis, he lets his Deutsche Haus audience know, must be allowed to dispose of the Great Lakes according to its fancy."⁷⁵

Talk of a political boss speaking at a German hall was better suited to 1917–18. Thompson had long since moved on to new images.

Notes

- 1. For the send off, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, July 6, 1924; for the crowds, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 19, 1924. The idea of Chicago as part of an inland waterway dated to William Lorimer two decades earlier. Joel Arthur Tarr, A *Study in Boss Politics: William Lorimer of Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 169-70.
- 2. For rumors, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 13, 1923, Apr. 1, 1923, Apr. 4, 1923, and Chicago Defender, Mar. 31, 1923; see also Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 194–95; vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1924, 736–37; for the anti-Dever flier, see Committee of Public School Teachers, box 50, Chicago Teachers' Federation Papers, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS). Reputed to be part of DePriest's efforts were Second Ward Committeeman Edward H. Wright and Alderman Louis Anderson. Dever won both the Second and Third Wards.

The city's first two Irish-Catholic mayors, both Democrats, were John Hopkins (1893–95) and Edward Dunne (1905–7). Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, eds., Biographical Dictionary of American Mayors, 1820–1980: Big City Mayors (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 106, 168.

3. For biographical information on Dever, see John R. Schmidt, "The Mayor Who Cleaned Up Chicago": A Political Biography of William E. Dever (DeKalb: North-

ern Illinois University Press, 1989), chaps. 1–3; Douglas Bukowski's "William Dever and Prohibition: The Mayoral Elections of 1923 and 1927," *Chicago History* 7 (Summer 1978), is entertaining but inadequate in light of further research. While a superior court judge, Dever also served two terms on the state appellate court.

- 4. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 17, 1923.
- 5. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 23, 1923.
- 6. Chicago Tribune, Sept. 20, 1923.
- 7. Schmidt, Dever, 158.
- 8. For the trade school, see Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award, Your Opportunity to Perform a Great Service to the Community, CHS; for the train tickets, see The Landis Award, 14,000 Mark Passed, Landis Award Clippings, CHS; for tradesmen placed and contractor assessments, see Royal E. Montgomery, Industrial Relations in the Chicago Building Trades (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 280–81, 290n; for contribution options, see Charles R. Jones to W. H. Graves, Nov. 18, 1926, box X, Citizens' Committee–Landis folder, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Jones served on the group's finance committee; Graves was Rosenwald's personal secretary.
- 9. For bolshevik disciples, see *The Landis Award*, Oct. 29, 1923, Landis Award Clippings, CHS; for the dances, see *Landis Award*, Feb. 11, 1923; for the identity cards, see *Landis Award*, Oct. 3, 1924.
- 10. For the police force and Donnelley's remark, see Montgomery, *Industrial Relations*, 281; for the killings and reward, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1922, May 11, 1922, and *Chicago Daily News*, May 11, 1922.
- 11. For the BTC membership, see Montgomery, *Industrial Relations*, 55; for the indictments, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 12, 1922; for the convictions and remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 22, 1922. Crowe, Charles Fitzmorris, and a West Parks Board member also helped raise \$5,000 in reward money.

Crowe generated some two hundred labor-related indictments but found convictions difficult to win. *The Nation* commented: "Nobody knows who first suggested 'labor terrorism' in connection with the murder of the two policemen. But a mere suggestion was sufficient for every newspaper in Chicago to pounce upon the idea. The newspapers played it up to the police and the police played it back to the papers. Public hysteria was stimulated; editions were sold. The facts were left for historians to mull over after they no longer mattered." Mader was not convicted. "Factories of Public Opinion," *The Nation* 117 (Dec. 5, 1923): 623.

The murders obscured a labor rally held ten days earlier. Protests against the Citizens' Committee featured a parade of fifty thousand protestors and a speech by Samuel Gompers at Municipal Pier; labor indictments ultimately proved more newsworthy. *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 30, 1922.

12. For the construction figure and work done, see Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award, *The Landis Award, Its Purposes and Accomplishments*, CHS; for the trustee votes, see University of Chicago Board of Trustees, *Minutes*

12 (1921–22): May 18, 1922, and 13 (1923): Oct. 11, 1923, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library. The immediate effect of the committee was to create a civil war in the trades, with about half of the members of the Building Trades Council accepting the terms; the "outlawed" carpenters fought the Citizens' Committee in court. By late 1926, labor scarcity had driven up wages, forced the group to reaccept the closed shop, and signalled the committee's eventual demise. Montgomery, *Industrial Relations*, 295–96, 301–6, and *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 14, 1929.

- 13. For Dever's appearance, see Landis Award Journeyman, May 1, 1924, Landis Award Clippings, CHS; for Sprague, see Johnston report of Jan. 17, 1920, Ralph Boehm, ed., U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917–1941 (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984), file series 10110–1649, reel 15; for Sprague's membership, see Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award, Your Opportunity; for the street laborers' strike, see James W. Errant, "Trade Unionism in the Civil Service of Chicago, 1895–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 200. Sprague probably moved against the street laborers because their leaders—Big Tim Murphy and Michael Carrozzo—were suspected of ties to organized crime and as such would not receive much public support.
- 14. "The Control of the Teacher's Job," American Teacher, Sept. 1916, box 45, Chicago Teachers' Federation Papers.
- 15. For Dever's appointments, see Stephen D. London, "Business and the Chicago Public School System, 1890–1966" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1968), 99; for McAndrew's remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 14, 1924.
- 16. Mortenson to McAndrew, undated, box 52, Chicago Teachers' Federation Papers; for the city council vote and McAndrew's explanation, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1924; for background on teachers' councils, see Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 150–54, and George S. Counts, *School and Society in Chicago* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1928; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 107–30. The councils met once, in March 1924, and voiced opposition to the platoon system.
- 17. For the plans, see Herrick, Chicago Schools, 145-50, and Julia Wrigley, Class Politics and Public Schools: Chicago, 1900-1950 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1982), chap. 5; for a general treatment of the school situation through the 1920s, see Counts, School and Society; for McAndrew's comment, see Chicago Tribune, July 9, 1924.
- 18. For the injunction, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1924, Sept. 11, 1924; for the CFL-Ford analogy, see Wrigley, *Class Politics*, 171.
 - 19. Wrigley, Class Politics, 170.
- 20. For the CFL report, see *New Majority*, July 26, 1924; for the adoption of new programs, see Herrick, *Chicago Schools*, 144–50. Ironically, the CFL had become a strong supporter of the junior high by the 1930s, when it was discontinued as an economy measure. Wrigley, *Class Politics*, 169.

- 21. Chicago Tribune editorials, Sept. 10, 1924, Oct. 3, 1924.
- 22. Herrick, Chicago Schools, 159.
- 23. For the customers' estimate, see Wrigley, Class Politics, 177; for Sampling Day, see "An Editorial Review," Educational Review (Apr. 1926): 174–78. The schools-utilities analogy proved prophetic in at least one regard—both faced bankruptcy in Chicago during the 1930s.
 - 24. "An Editorial Review," 174-78.
- 25. McAndrew-Fitzpatrick correspondence reprinted in *Federation News*, June 12, 1926.

Incredibly, McAndrew found other ways in which to antagonize. He favored pay increases for veteran teachers through reduced salaries for new teachers, required teacher sign-ins four times daily, and refused to allow schoolchildren to help in the collection of restoration funds for the USS Constitution. Herrick, Chicago Schools, 154–57; Schmidt, Dever, 154–55.

- 26. Elementary School Journal 25 (Oct. 1924): 82; School Review 32 (Sept. 1924): 490.
 - 27. Chicago Tribune, Sept. 4, 1924.
 - 28. Chicago Defender, Apr. 24, 1926.
- 29. Chicago Defender, May 8, 1926. The Hill text still offended a year later. In a letter to CFL vice president (and Thompson ally) Oscar F. Nelson, Victor Olander charged that the work contained "constabulary propaganda which has no purpose in any text book except to be exposed as propaganda." Nelson also was an alderman and about to serve as Thompson's floor leader in the city council; Olander was secretary-treasurer of the Illinois Federation of Labor. Copy of Olander to Nelson, Apr. 16, 1927, Victor Olander Papers, CHS.
- 30. For the handshake, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 10, 1926, Nov. 14, 1926; for the aldermen's response, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 10, 1926.
- 31. Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey (Chicago: Works Progress Administration, 1942), L/C. (Attitudes, Own or Other Language Groups), Daily Jewish Forward, Nov. 9, 1926, Nov. 12, 1926.
 - 32. Federation News, Nov. 13, 1926.
 - 33. Federation News, Nov. 6, 1926.
- 34. For the riot, see *Chicago Examiner*, Nov. 14, 1926; for steelworkers, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 16, 1926.
- 35. Chicago Tribune, Nov. 14–16, 1926. The Examiner and Daily News did not differ in their coverage.
 - 36. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 18, 1923.
- 37. Summary of the agreement (possibly made by M. R. Werner), box 55, folder 1, Rosenwald Papers. The summary also notes that by December 1934 the Depression had deflated the worth of the stock to \$40,000; it is unclear when Collins received the stock. See also M. R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 310.

In 1926 Rosenwald offered Frank L. Smith \$555,000 in Sears-Roebuck stock to

drop out of the Senate race. Werner refers to the incident as "the most irregular and naive action of his entire career." *Rosenwald*, 305. For bribe offers to Collins, see Schmidt, *Dever*, 106.

- 38. For the cafés, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1923; for the September sweep, see Schmidt, *Dever*, 85–86. The *Tribune* noted the interracial "soul kisses" that allegedly took place in the black and tans.
 - 39. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 8, 1923.
- 40. For Torrio and the syndicate, see Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, Big Bill of Chicago (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 237–38; for Torrio's arrival in Chicago, see Herbert Asbury, Gem of the Prairie: An Informal History of the Chicago Underworld (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940; reprint, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 263; for his assassination attempt, see Asbury, 353–54. By November 1923 Dever had revoked the licenses of 1,600 businesses suspected of Prohibition violations; the police raided and closed down over 4,000 saloons in the same period. Schmidt, Dever, 86–87. By April 1926, an estimated 19,000 speakeasies operating as coffee shops had been forced out of business. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 23, 1926.

I do not wish to defend organized crime or the violence inherent in it. However, Torrio's attempt to rationalize his operations should be noted.

41. "Drying Up Chicago," *Literary Digest*, Dec. 15, 1923; *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1923; William E. Dever, "Get at the Facts," *Atlantic Monthly*, Oct. 1926; Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 239.

Research into the history of organized crime has yet to move beyond the scope of a morality play. Capone's Cicero headquarters were located within a five-minute walk of Western Electric's massive Hawthorne Works. How a factory kept more than 20,000 workers from drinking when the temptation was so close at hand is a fascinating question, but one that so far has not been asked, let alone answered.

- 42. Houston Post, Nov. 15, 1924.
- 43. Houston Post, Oct. 14, 1926; Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 15, 1926; "To Kick Out Chicago's Alien Gunmen," *Literary Digest*, Mar. 6, 1926, 10; "No Federal Mop for Chicago's Crime Wave," *Literary Digest*, Mar. 20, 1926, 7. Ironically, the cartoons were reprinted from Chicago newspapers.
- 44. Referendum vote rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1923, 754; for Cermak's efforts, see Alex Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago: A Study of Political Leadership* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 125–28; for beer versus whiskey, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 26, 1923.
 - 45. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 7, 1924.
- 46. For the traction ordinance, see Schmidt, *Dever*, chap. 7; for the testimony, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 24, 1926. In November 1926, another advisory referendum on Prohibition produced a vote of better than 2-1 in the city (439,111 to 170,182) for modification; *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1927, 753. Neither the referendum nor the defeat of the traction ordinance prompted George Brennan to drop Dever for reelection. Either the party chief was not as adept as Paul Green

suggests or he preferred Dever's ethnicity to Cermak's; both Brennan and Dever were Irish. For a contrasting view, see Paul M. Green, "Irish Chicago: The Multi-Ethnic Road to Machine Success," in *Ethnic Chicago*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, revised and expanded (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984).

- 47. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 217-20 (quote on 217).
- 48. Small to Thompson, May 14, 1924, Lennington Small Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield; for the West Parks Board maneuvering, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 25, 1924, Apr. 30, 1924, May 2, 1924; for the Lincoln Park Board, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Jan. 1, 1926.
 - 49. Thompson to Small, Nov. 8, 1923, Small Papers.
- 50. For the road-building figures, see National Industrial Conference Board, *The Fiscal Problem in Illinois* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1927), 27; puzzle in possession of the author; *Chicago Tribune* editorial, Apr. 9, 1924. The airplanes flew from Chicago but did not arrive until dark. Unfortunately, Small did not allow other such revealing correspondence to survive; his papers contain very little of a political nature.
- of Illinois, 1899–1928 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 374–81; for Wright's appointment, see Chicago Tribune, Nov. 21, 1923, and Gosnell, Negro Politicians, 153; for a review of Small's labor record, see Illinois State Federation of Labor, Weekly News Letter, Mar. 10, 1928, Victor Olander Papers, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago; for Small and labor, see Eugene Staley, History of the Illinois Federation of Labor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 418–19, 514–16; for the pardons, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 204, and William H. Stuart, The Twenty Incredible Years (Chicago: M. A. Donahue, 1935), 215–18; draft of May 14 letter in Small Papers.

Historically, Small has served the same function as Thompson—an enduring symbol of political corruption; political ability has been a largely ignored consideration.

- 52. New York Times, June 14, 1924.
- 53. Chicago Tribune, July 27, 1924.
- 54. For Nelson on Washington, see report of CPPA convention of July 4, 1924, Congress for Progressive Political Action Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; copy of La Follette to Nelson, Aug. 1, 1924, La Follette Family Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.
- 55. For the South Seas, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 217–18; for the Senate proposition, see Chicago Tribune, Sept. 16, 1924; for the petition, see Carroll Hill Wooddy, The Chicago Primary of 1926: A Study in Election Methods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 120n; for Thompson's political exile, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 214–32, and Stuart, Incredible Years, chaps. 12–14.

- 56. For the primary, see Wooddy, *Chicago Primary*, chap. 1; for Harding's background and terms, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 94, 168-69, 222-23.
 - 57. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 216.
- 58. Thompson to Borah, Jan. 27, 1926, Illinois Invitations, William E. Borah Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.
- 59. Copy of Borah to Thompson telegram, Feb. 3, 1926, Illinois Invitations, Borah Papers.
- 60. Thompson to Borah telegram, Feb. 20, 1926, Illinois Invitations, Borah Papers.
- 61. For the speech, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Feb. 23, 1926; *Chicago Tribune* editorial, Feb. 24, 1926. Senator James A. Reed of Missouri accompanied Borah for a planned series of anti-World Court speeches.
 - 62. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 18, 1926.
 - 63. Ibid.
 - 64. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Apr. 7, 1926.
 - 65. Chicago Daily News editorial, Apr. 7, 1926.
- 66. For a description of the events, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 7, 1926; for Ickes's introduction, see Chicago Tribune, Apr. 10, 1926; for the election results, see Stuart, Incredible Years, 269–70. Ickes's isolationism resulted from his friendship with Hiram Johnson. See Harold L. Ickes, The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 222. After learning of Smith's campaign contribution from Samuel Insull, Ickes managed (unsuccessfully) the independent candidacy of Hugh Magill in the general election.
 - 67. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Apr. 15, 1926.
- 68. For Insull's testimony, see Carroll Hill Wooddy, The Case of Frank L. Smith: A Study in Representative Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 59. Julius Rosenwald contributed \$6,200 to the book, which contained no mention of the philanthropist's proposal to Smith. Shortly after the work's publication, Smith went public with the stock offer and suggested Wooddy use the information for another chapter. Stuart, Incredible Years, 260–63, and Werner, Rosenwald, 314–15.
- 69. For Insull's background, see Forrest McDonald, *Insull* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 178–81, 313; for Insull's control of electricity, see Harold L. Platt, *The Electric City: Energy and the Growth of the Chicago Area* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 272; John Dos Passos, *The Big Money* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 523; for Ickes's speculation, see T. H. Watkins, *Righteous Pilgrim: The Life and Times of Harold L. Ickes*, 1874–1952 (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 233.
- 70. Chicago Tribune, July 27, 1926. Insull testified that he made the contribution "to my friend George Brennan, and I am ashamed it was not more." Wooddy, Smith, 56-57.

- 71. For Thompson's testimony, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 4, 1926; for the Ettleson-Schuyler relationship, see McDonald, *Insull*, 256-57.
 - 72. John H. Williamson, I Met an American (privately printed, 1951), 153.
 - 73. San Francisco Examiner, July 21, 1926.
 - 74. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 4, 1926.

The relationship soured with Thompson out of office after 1931. When Thompson complained in 1938 about an uncomplimentary piece in the *Chicago American*, a lawyer asked other papers in the Hearst chain, "Will you therefore please have any clips in your Reference Room which copy or are similar to the above quotation concerning William Hale Thompson marked 'LOOK OUT FOR LIBEL'?" Edward G. Woods to All Reference Rooms, Feb. 17, 1938, in microfiche of Thompson clippings, courtesy of the *San Francisco Examiner*.

75. Minneapolis Tribune, Oct. 28, 1926.





Some of the many faces of Thompson: The commodore (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-064639; *Chicago Daily News*), the baseball fan at Wrigley Field (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; ICHi-26570; Burke & Koretke), and, above all, the cowboy (*second from right*) capable of appearing in Grant Park on horseback with chaps (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-072189; *Chicago Daily News*).



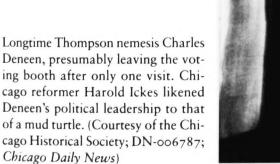




The essence of Thompson politics consisted of a ribbon to cut (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; ICHi-26574) and a party to celebrate the mayor who did the honors (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; ICHi-26571). All else was a means to those ends.



Thompson had the ability to see virtually anything, including an airplane on the ground, as a vehicle for self-promotion. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-084618; *Chicago Daily News*)





Win With Merriam



Capt. Charles E.

MERRIAM FOR MAYOR

Leader in Chicago City Council 1909-11, 1913-17

Local Champion of Democracy in Government Fearless Foe of Special Interests

HE WILL MAKE YOU PROUD OF CHICAGO

Republican Primaries, February 25, 1919

Charles Merriam thought he could win the 1919 Republican mayoral nomination by posing as a returning war veteran. Voters did not agree. (Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, the University of Chicago Library)

How Sweitzer and Thompson Appealed to Race Prejudice for Votes

(Fac-Simile of Letter Sent Out by Robert M. Sweitzer in last Mayor-







Chicago, April 3, 1915

German and Austrian-American citizens (men and women) have a duty to perform Chicago on next Tuesday, April 6th, a duty which is of the utmost importance to ever person of German and Austrian birth or descent, in every part of the world.

Germany and Austria were driven into a war last year with nearly every nation in Europe. The war was forced upon Germany and Austria. They did not seek it. Germany and Austria are sure to win, but need the united support of Germans and Austria severy-where and under all conditions. You, your relatives and friends, can be of great assistance to Germany and Austria next Tuesday, by electing Robert M. Sweitzer, an honest, efficient, loyal and energetic German-American, Mayor of Chicago.

Chicago has a larger German population than any city in the world, excepting Berlin and Vienna, and the German, Austrian and Hungarian-Americans should, at this coming election, set aside every other consideration and vote as a unit for Robert M. Sweitzer. Stand shoulder to shoulder in this election as our countrymen in the trenches and on the high seas are fighting for the preservation of our dear Fatherland. The election of a German-American would be a fitting answer to the defamers of the Fatherland and cause a tremendous moral effect throughout the United States and re-echo in Germany, Austria and Hungary. Our countrymen in the Fatherland are bitterly complaining about the unfair treatment accorded them by the majority of American newspapers.

Let us on next Tuesday, April 6th, flash the message throughout the world that the second largest city in the United States has elected for its Mayor a German-American, Robert M. Sweitzer - It will be a wonderful encouragement to the friends of the George cause and the most effective rebuke to Anti-German agitation throughout this country.

Vote next Tuesday for Mr. Sweitzer by placing a cross in front of his name as indicated below: Republican

Progressive



Yours fraternally.

is Letter was Sponsored by 1160 Citizens of Chicago with German or Austrian Names. These Name, Not Here Reproduced Because Undoubtedly, Some of Them were Used Without Permission or Authority



This is the sort of Appeal to Race Prejudice that is a Slur on American Citizenship—

MACLAY HOYNE



(Fac-Simile of

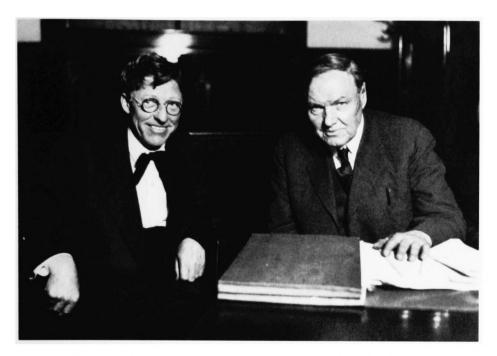
Join the Maclay Hoyne 300,000 Club Headquarters FOR THE HONOR OF CHICAGO

MAKE IT A LANDSLIDE FOR MACLAY HOYNE

The Dear Fatherland Letter and German-language campaign buttons from 1915 served the diverse needs of three mayoral candidates over the course of two elections. The campaign material showed either a sensitivity to Chicago's diverse voting population or a lack of patriotism—it was all a matter of perspective and the desire for votes. (Courtesy of the Municipal Reference Library, Chicago City Hall)



Although he looked just as presidential as Warren Harding, Illinois governor Frank Lowden failed to capture the 1920 Republican nomination. Thompson helped block his former ally's bid at the convention. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; ICHi-26569; Moffett Studio)



Fred Lundin with Clarence Darrow, the attorney who kept so many Thompson associates out of jail. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-075818; Chicago Daily News)



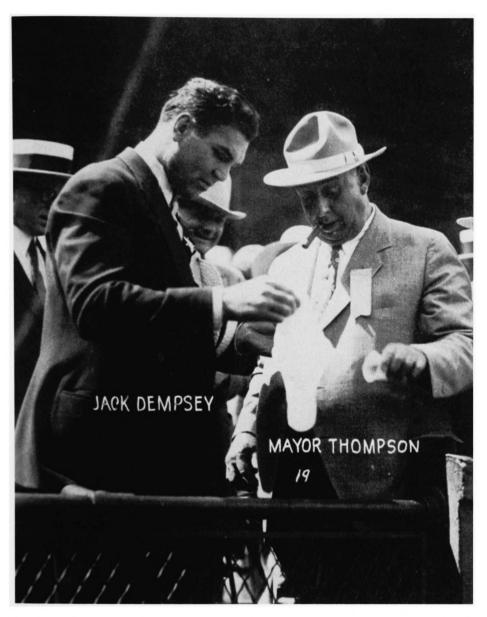
Mayor William Dever (*right*) with cowboy actor Tom Mix, 1925. Dever lacked Thompson's gift for political acting. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-078892; *Chicago Daily News*)



School Superintendent William McAndrew (with beard) made a convenient target for Thompson during the 1927 mayor's race. This ceremony of a year earlier did not stop Thompson from charging that McAndrew was a tool of the king of England. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-080552; Chicago Daily News)

Election night, 1927. The challenger sits with his glasses placed on his forehead. However, there was no need for concern. Dever was out and Thompson was in. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-083173; Chicago Daily News)





One legend meets another. Heavyweight boxer Jack Dempsey and Thompson at Wrigley Field, August 1927. A month later, Dempsey lost to Gene Tunney at Soldier Field, and Thompson invited the victor to live in Chicago. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; ICHi-26572; Burke & Koretke)



All the king's horses and all the king's men... By the time of the Memorial Day 1928 parade, Thompson ally Governor Len Small had been rendered a lame duck, and the mayor was soon to suffer a nervous breakdown. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-85744; Chicago Daily News)



Not all newspaper publishers hated Thompson. William Randolph Hearst (*third from left*) was quite comfortable with Chicago's mayor, so much so that Thompson received invitations to San Simeon. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-093417; *Chicago Daily News*)

ONLY A GRAND DAD

mak campaign flier shows

that the Democrat had no intention of fighting Thompson on his own terms. Rather,

This illustration from a Cer-

Cermak portrayed himself as

the committed public servant

little claim to either. (Courtesy of the Municipal Reference

Library, Chicago City Hall)

and family man. Thompson, for all his years in office, had

FROM MINE BOY TO

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

N AN old form school book, down in Braidwood, Illinois, a lad of eleven years, with the aid of the forch on a miner's cap read in his childish way the following quotation:

The Heights by Great Men
Reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their
Companions slept

Were toiling upward in the right."

It was night most of the day fory young Cermak — because the sun scarcely beamed on any day that did not find him at work driving a mine mule, swinging a trap door and wondering if the chain of events that make up life would ever elevate him to the surface and the sunshine.

The Braidwood sun first shown upon him as a babe in his mother's arms, when circumstances had forced his father ro leave Chicago to secure employment in the mine fields of Will and Grundy, Counties.

Like most of the sons of miners, young Cermak attended school at Braidwood and played around his Braidwood and played around his mome with an old miner's cap and looked forward to the day when he would be big enough to enter the mines.

Object the age when most boys of today are looking forward to a Boy Coul membership. A 1 Cermak was a cog in the wheel of coal production from the mines at Braidwood, Carbon Hill, Coal City and Seatonville.

Himmers at Braidwood, Carbon Him. Coal City and Seatonville.

Even as a mine boy the personality of Cernak, which tends to draw men to him, was evident and there is hardly a miner in his state who does not know his name and record a



Anton Cermak (*right*) taking the oath of office after defeating Thompson in 1931. Administering the oath is Judge Edmund K. Jarecki, a Polish component of Cermak's ethnic coalition. (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society; DN-095487; *Chicago Daily News*)

7

A Machine without Democrats, a Demagogue before Long

"I'm drunk. Happy New Year. Whoops!" Studs yelled loudly: He staggered backwards and forwards with the utterance of each syllable.

-James T. Farrell, The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan

A CROWD OF FIFTY THOUSAND gathered in Humboldt Park. They were the people of Chicago's Polonia, come to celebrate the sesquicentennial of Thaddeus Kosciuszko's arrival in America. During the tribal twenties, a Revolutionary War hero from Poland was both cause for celebration and proof of a group's patriotism. One speaker used Kosciuszko for yet a third purpose. He noted the "indissoluble bond of human love and sympathy" that exists between "suffering and oppressed" groups. Such people were bound together "into a brotherhood and community of consolidated interests" that ranged the emotions. "This kindred suffering," he believed, "is the bond that united the oppressed people of Poland, through Kosciuszko, to the enslaved Africans in America." The Chicago Defender reprinted the speech in English and Polish versions; it had been given by the paper's publisher, Robert Abbott.¹

Abbott grew up in the Jim Crow South, where white politicians did not bother to campaign among the disfranchised. The North and Big Bill Thompson were part of a different world, of two-party races and split tickets. Abbott wanted his readership to adjust accordingly. "As a matter of political policy we are opposed to racial solidarity, especially in local elections," the *Defender* informed readers shortly after Thompson's reelection

in 1919. "Our voters should never allow any political party to draw a ring around them."²

The message was repeated four years later, even with Thompson gone and his possible replacement a Democrat: "Fortunately for Chicago we have been the recipients of fair and just treatment from most public officials who have been elected as Democrats. For example, [there are] Edward F. Dunne and Carter Harrison, who served many years as mayors of Chicago and under whose administrations we had no cause for complaint." Thompson afforded more patronage, "but in all other respects there was actually no difference." Following the 1923 election, it seemed possible William Dever would "give us an administration free from party bias and acceptable to all classes."

While he expressed misgivings about the black-and-tan raids, Abbott saw cause for optimism. The new mayor was indeed a man intent on disproving stereotypes: Irish bigot and Irish pol, Dever had little use for either. He showed as much in early 1924, when the Auditorium revived *Birth of a Nation*. City officials moved to ban the film by enforcing a state movie censorship act. After theater management threatened legal action, the city backed off. Although disappointing, Dever's response to the movie's showing was no worse than Thompson's had been, and the black community found the same reason to forgive. Like his predecessor, Dever had learned that city employment erased a multitude of sins.

Virtually the same number of black police officers served under Dever as Thompson; losses in blue-collar patronage were balanced, at least in part, by continued prestige appointments. Dever followed the practice of appointing blacks to the office of the corporation counsel, and he became the first Chicago mayor to name an African American, Dr. George Cleveland Hall, to the library board.

At least one gesture extended beyond the merely political. Dever personally contributed one hundred dollars to help rebuild the Greater Bethel A.M.E. Church on Grand Boulevard. The building had been destroyed in a fire some believed was set by the Klan. The new Democrat did seem in some ways to resemble the old Republican.⁴

Dever's sensitivity may have set an example for other Chicago Democrats. In January 1926 the South Parks Board rejected a proposed monument to black war veterans; the project supposedly threatened traffic congestion along Grand Boulevard. The board reconsidered after a *Defender* publicity campaign and a St. Patrick's Day visit by black community leaders. Board president (and future mayor) Edward J. Kelly along with two other Irish board members changed their votes, enough for the measure

to pass. The *Defender* hailed them for seeing how "the same spirit that had made the great Irish orator Daniel O'Connell an advocate of the rights of his race" also motivated African Americans.⁵

Abbott offered his own surprise, an endorsement of George Brennan for the U.S. Senate. Abbott predicted in the editorial "Why I Indorse George E. Brennan" that Brennan would back antilynching legislation as well as enforcement of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. "Are there any better reasons why I should not lend myself to a candidate so worthy?" he challenged. "I am for George E. Brennan because he is for justice and fair play." To dispel any doubt, the paper ran side-by-side photographs of Brennan and Thompson under the headline "Two Courageous and Fearless Friends of the Race."

But Abbott misread the situation: Cordiality was not acceptance, for either side. Even had the Second and Third Wards gone for Brennan (which they did not), Democrats would not have known what to do next. George Brennan was at heart an old-line Irish politician who treated ethnicity and race as possible threats to his power; he differed from Roger Sullivan only by degree. In 1922 a group of party dissidents fought to slate twelve Irish candidates for fourteen major county offices. "What would happen if the Poles controlled the primary and left all the Irish off?" Brennan asked.⁷

And yet Brennan did little better himself in the 1926 primary—the party slate included at least twenty-five Irish candidates for forty-two county office races. In contrast, Thompson campaigned for a ticket including four Irish, six Jewish, and ten German candidates. African Americans were too far down the list of groups demanding recognition in the 1920s to become part of the Democratic fold. The situation changed with the Depression, but the relationship Abbott sought—where African Americans acknowledged the struggles of the Polish or Irish and in turn were deemed politically equal—never evolved. The upcoming mayoral election would show that all too clearly.8

Against a Republican other than Thompson, Democrats might not have used the race issue so freely; backing a candidate such as Dever, they probably rationalized that they had no other choice. The party lacked a clear alternative to Dever because it did not cultivate talent the way Tammany had with Al Smith and Robert Wagner. As for Anton Cermak, Brennan knew he would be impossible to control. The ideal solution would have been to match Thompson's images, Dever running as the reformer in 1915 and Robert Sweitzer as the wet in 1927. But Brennan could not alter the past or risk running a two-time loser. He had to gamble that, with some-

thing to draw attention away from Prohibition, the respectable—and Irish—Dever could win.

First, however, the incumbent had to be convinced to seek reelection. Dever was enough of a politician to realize his unpopularity. Brennan countered by playing to his ego—Dever was needed by city and party. Further encouragement came from Julius Rosenwald. The philanthropist praised Dever for redeeming Chicago from the "terrible ravages of the eight years" previous. Further, Rosenwald argued, "it is your duty to see that the good work is carried on." In the face of such sweet reason, Dever relented.9

With the primary several weeks off, he left the city for a winter vacation. The tenor of what in many ways resembled a Southern election campaign surfaced, appropriately, in Biloxi, Mississippi. There Dever talked with a group of black children on his way to a game of golf. He either spoke out of fatigue-induced carelessness or in keeping with the dictates of his party chairman: "These children are being reared well, and they are as polite as can be. The schools here are nurturing a great development among these people and the results are greatly gratifying." 10

The *Tribune* preceded the quote with a subheading, "Chats With 'Pickininnies." For politician and newspaper, race was becoming an issue of ever-increasing interest. Brennan later clarified what his candidate had only implied. "I cannot believe that the people of Chicago will repudiate honest and efficient government," he said following Dever's renomination in the party primary, "and turn the city over to be ruled by the black belt, the gunmen and the hoodlums."¹¹

Brennan assumed African Americans would vote for Thompson regardless of Dever's record on race; an appeal to prejudice was seen as the most effective way to neutralize Thompson's black support. Democrats unveiled their strategy in early March, when police arrested one thousand blacks in a series of raids on the South Side. Police Chief Collins explained that he had to act because, in the wake of Thompson's primary win over Edward R. Litsinger, "white people didn't dare walk on the sidewalks for fear of being elbowed off." 12

State representative Michael Igoe echoed Collins at a North Side campaign rally for Dever. "The fellow who wrote 'Bye-Bye Blackbird' didn't have Chicago in mind," Igoe told listeners. "I've no dislike for my colored brothers; I've lived among them all my life on the South Side." He simply wanted them to know their place, as they did on the North Side. "We're entitled to that at the hands of the members of our own race." By Igoe's reckoning, Thompson was denying him that right.¹³

Like Charles Merriam in 1919, Dever rationalized political means and

ends—a bit of demagogy would save reform. He warned of South Side "dens of vice and iniquity" and the threat they posed to "decent and honorable colored people" and to "white people whose property and homes are located in and adjacent to the district." As he embraced a list of stereotypes, Dever became one himself.¹⁴

The *Tribune* condemned the blatant use of race—and blamed the Republican candidate. "When Thompson speaks in the wards and threatens to make it hotter than hell for the police the day after he is elected and when he promises the colored people their day in this city, he isn't gaining votes in the Negro wards. He has the votes now." Yet Democrats were held to a less exacting standard.¹⁵

Maclay Hoyne was among those contributing to a campaign that billed itself as "Dever and Decency." The former state's attorney still blamed Thompson for the 1919 race riot. "It would have been stopped immediately except for the rottenness and inefficiency of the police department," Hoyne said from Washington. "The policemen in the district had been given orders to favor the blacks and didn't dare to act against them." Hoyne also released a statement charging "whenever Thompson hits the colored wards he forgets all about King George and 'America First' and the slogan becomes 'Africa First." Both remarks ran in the *Tribune* without comment or criticism. ¹⁶

On the surface, the veteran social reformer Raymond Robins seemed a polar opposite of Hoyne. As a young man, Robins worked for Graham Taylor at Chicago Commons, where he managed Dever's first successful aldermanic campaign in 1902. During World War I, Robins served with the Red Cross in Russia; his contacts with Lenin and Trotsky fed rumors in Moscow that he would be appointed the first American ambassador to the Soviet Union. By 1923 Robins was back in Chicago campaigning for Dever. He attacked Republicans with that year's club of preference. "They will never put the Kleagle of the Ku Klux in the city hall," he told one election-eve crowd.¹⁷

Robins expressed different fears four years later. "I speak as a friend of the honest colored man," he said, "but when a candidate offers to open the city as a haven for the other type of colored man, the crapshooters and the crooked Negroes from all parts of America, I'd rather denounce it from the public platform than whisper about it." And as Hoyne did, Robins saw Thompson "talking 'America First' and acting 'Africa First." Race mattered as never before in a Chicago election—the *Tribune* ran the remarks of a Brennan or an Igoe, a Hoyne or a Robins, as though fact while the *Daily News* printed stories on the possible influx of African Americans from the South.¹⁸

Race also figured prominently in Dever's campaign ads; the image of Willie Horton appeared in Chicago more than six decades before it played on national television. "Mayor Dever is opposed to the importation of undesirable labor for the purpose of breaking down the working conditions and wages of Chicago labor" read an ad in the *Tribune* for Dever's trade union committee. The group's ad in the *Herald-Examiner* showed Thompson and two toughs, one of them black, trying to derail Dever's Prosperity Special.¹⁹

The Independent Republican Dever Committee—with members James Patten and Julius Rosenwald of Landis Award controversy—ran a two-page election-eve ad, "They Shall Not Pass!!" It depicted "the forces of right battling against greed, scandal, misuse of public funds, race hatreds, the contamination of youth." Dame Chicago confronted figures labeled Ignorance, Disease, Filth, Crime, Graft, Corruption, and Unemployment. "Guard your children, your schools, your home!" urged a headline.²⁰

Thompson had exposed some unflattering political truths the ads did not address. He showed a Democratic party unable or unwilling to play coalition politics and a respectable press grown impotent; editorial outrage that once helped topple Lorimer seemed only to strengthen Thompson. And the demagogue caught millionaire and reformer alike employing fear to incite voters.

Any real alternative to Thompson demanded a compromise between classes and groups, but no one was willing. It was more convenient to paper over differences with race prejudice, as Dever's commissioner of public works did. "It seems to me," A. A. Sprague said late in the campaign, "the laboring man should realize what a big influx of colored men would mean to him." And, Sprague implied, forget what the Citizens' Committee had meant.²¹

Race became a obsession to members of the Dever coalition. They talked it at rallies, exploited it with palm cards of Thompson kissing a black child ("Thompson—Me Africa First" appearing on the reverse side), and used it as the focus of dirty tricks. Democrats hired blacks to canvass for Thompson in white neighborhoods and tried to get black Thompson supporters to flood downtown—where blacks did not ordinarily venture—for a bogus rally at Thompson headquarters. The message was even set to music. Three days before the election, a calliope appeared downtown to entertain passersby. The choice of music—"Bye-Bye Blackbird"—was as inevitable as it was deliberate.²²

Early on, Thompson's candidacy disturbed Republicans nearly as much as it did George Brennan. Edward Brundage broke with Robert Crowe to

join Charles Deneen for Edward Litsinger in the February primary; meanwhile, Fred Lundin backed Dr. John Dill Robertson, Thompson's former health commissioner. Opponents assumed Thompson would stumble without Lundin and fail to make an issue of America First. Both assumptions proved wrong.

Thompson avoided missteps through the primary and general election; success no longer depended on Fred Lundin, if it ever had. And Thompson knew not to overwork a good thing like America First. He might, for example, level charges of urban treason, as he did in a public letter to Litsinger. Edward Brundage and Fred Lundin were, allegedly, suburbanites. Litsinger came from Back of the Yards on the South Side, but "You moved to the Gold Coast. Are you too thinking of joining the highbrows of Lake Forest and becoming a resident of Lake County too?" (Demagogue geography continued into the general election, possibly through the efforts of the journalist William Stuart, who chaired Thompson's publicity committee. Orville James Taylor, chairman of the Independent Republicans for Dever, wrote Julius Rosenwald to decry his treatment in William Randolph Hearst's pro-Thompson *American*, where Stuart worked as political editor. The indignant Taylor denied ever having held a polo mallet or living in exclusive Lake Forest.)²³

This directness and simplicity were deceptive. Critics were content to dismiss Big Bill on King George. Others paid closer attention and heard appeals to class and ethnicity. Those listeners approved, and Thompson overwhelmed Litsinger by 180,000 votes. The win was so unexpected, the 342,000-vote total so convincing—more than double that in the entire Democratic primary—that Brundage and Deneen had little choice other than to endorse the victor. Only Fred Lundin refused to admit defeat. Lundin instructed Robertson to drop out of the primary so he could run as an independent in the general election.²⁴

Thompson's demagogy was far more relevant than detractors imagined. Every charge, no matter how absurd on the surface, served a purpose. "Bill Thompson stands for America first, Dever stands for America seventh" was the kind of remark cited daily in the respectable press as proof of a buffoon on the dais. Yet the campaign embraced considerably more.²⁵

There was, of course, Prohibition, with Thompson offering advice on how best to contact police: Forget the station house and "call the brewery. They've got the police in the breweries to see nobody rolls out a few barrels on them and holds out on the shakedown. When I'm elected mayor, the detectives and police won't be fanning mattresses for pints or breaking in your doors sleuthing for clues for a hip flask in the pantry." ²⁶

After alcohol came water or, more precisely, water meters. The city had been trying to switch over from a flat-fee assessment, but Thompson would have none of it. He pledged to do everything he could to "free the people from the menace, burden and extortion of the infamous water-meter ordinance." The faucet running all day in summer carried a strong emotional appeal. To the poor and working class, meters suggested efficiency, and they vaguely resembled time clocks. Thompson stood for the "unstinted, unmetered flow of water in the homes of the people, in the interest of cool, fresh milk for the babes of the poor" and the good of all Chicago. As such, he saw no reason to consider the possibility that metered water was cheaper.²⁷

With every seemingly fantastic charge, Thompson challenged Dever to speak the voters' language, which he could not; to talk beer and water would have returned the incumbent to a place he had spent a lifetime escaping. The press tried to respond in Dever's place, with little effect. Reporters and editors were not inclined to explain the complexity of issues Thompson rendered simple; at some point "good government" would have been exposed for the flawed panacea it was. Instead, the papers tried to humiliate through publicity. Campaign coverage only spread the word, for which Thompson could have reissued his 1915 thank-you note to the *Tribune*.

The Thompson of twelve years previous—the Commodore, who occasionally dropped the term "square deal" and referred to his Democratic opponent as "a good fellow"—had vanished. In his place was a saloon-keeper who railed against "this grey-haired crook George Brennan" and "his pliant tool, Mayor Dever." The appeal was to voters who put group recognition before syntax.²⁸

During the campaign, Thompson linked the University of Chicago with a conspiracy to rewrite American history. "Under McAndrews [sic], tool of the king," the history books had dropped great heroes. "George Washington fell out. Not here. Kosciuski [sic] and Pulaski fell out. . . . Poor Christopher Columbus, the Italian, he isn't in here anymore, the fellow that discovered America." ²⁹

Thompson no longer needed to speak well. People understood what he said and all that he implied. Big Bill opposed Prohibition, wanted the people of Chicago to enjoy lake water without having to pay by the gallon, and stood up to a university supported by members of the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award. He was no longer the discerning demagogue of 1918–23 because opponents had rendered caution unnecessary. They had, in essence, made Big Bill Thompson possible.

To the literal-minded, talk about George V (or III, Thompson was not

always clear which one he meant) and the threat of "handing the king one on the snoot" were nonsense. But observers were too far removed from the lives of ordinary Chicagoans to understand: Thompson offered his audiences a double dose of emotional release. His "king" could just as well be their "boss," "millionaire," or "newspaper publisher," along with "czar," "emperor," or "kaiser." Dissatisfied workers also may once have been unhappy subjects. People at a Thompson rally were perfectly willing to take an entertaining primer on isolationism and add their own meaning. Thompson, no doubt, knew they would.³⁰

Will Rogers observed that Dever tried "to beat Bill [Thompson] with the better element vote. The trouble with Chicago is that there ain't much better element." In fact there was too much, enough for Thompson to cast Independent Republicans for Dever as "the Gold Coast committee of absentee landlords" who spent \$10,000 a day on newspaper ads. (Thompson used women of wealth to make a different point. Speaking to a group of society women at the Opera Club, he greeted them as "my hoodlum friends.") Voters frustrated over class standing took notice. Dever had his millionaires, the working class had Big Bill Thompson for the asking.³¹

Support from the "better element" ultimately cost Democrats far too many votes. Labor leaders such as John Fitzpatrick of the CFL and Victor Olander of the Illinois Federation of Labor endorsed Dever by ignoring Donnelley and the rest, but the Cook County Wage Earners' League gave full attention to wealthy Republicans behind a Democratic mayor. Politically active since 1924, the league claimed to represent some three hundred thousand area union workers.

The group counterattacked the Citizens' Committee with a particularly blunt ad in the *Herald-Examiner*. Among those signing "No Guesswork about This" was Patrick F. Sullivan, president of the Building Trades Council; the Landis Award had bloodied the council without destroying it. "Organized labor knows that every member of the 'Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award' is fighting tooth and toenail for" Dever, the ad charged. The mayor's supporters "have attempted, with every resource at their command, to disrupt Union Labor in Chicago and tear down the bulwark it has erected to safeguard a living wage to the workman. The members of Organized Labor haven't short memories." Labor did "not want to restore the old conditions with their faces to the grindstone, glad to work at any price. They demand, as is their right, an honest wage for an honest day's labor." Ironically, the ad granted Dever's wish to be seen as something other than a typical Irish Democrat. He was beginning to look downright Republican.³²

Democrats assumed that race was the weapon to make Dever a winner; it was not supposed to be turned on them. They had not anticipated Thompson would translate the police roundup of blacks into a context European peasants understood: "The Cossacks were trying to bring about a reign of terror. If they do it to Negroes now, how soon before they do it to Jews, to Polacks, to Germans?" The remark touched audiences in a way the press could not readily see, and it cost Thompson little standing with the police. They were upset with Dever over "Piperizing," unannounced field checks on officer performance.³³

"Santa Claus has been good to me," Thompson admitted to an audience at the Four Cohans Theater five days before the election. "I've got a lot of stuff I've been bottling up about the University of Chicago," which he offered to an approving audience. There was Charles Merriam, "one of the biggest crooks in the United States"; the *Daily News*, "a dirty, lying political sheet"; William McAndrew, "the stool pigeon of the king of England" and "the man who has changed your history"; and selections from Arthur Schlesinger's *New Viewpoints in American History*, "all bunk" and full of conclusions unacceptable to the fair-minded and patriotic.³⁴

The university which sought to study a city was itself the object of attention. A student from the University of Chicago's Local Research Council brought a stenographer to the rally. When Thompson found out, he promised the crowd: "I am going to talk a little more about the Chicago University than I have ever talked about in my life." The student tried to explain that the university was not directly involved with the project. The crowd laughed, and Thompson asked him "to be good enough" to send copies of the speech to university officials "because I want them to have it." 35

Democrats finally caught a glimpse of the approaching headlights in the last week of the campaign. The People's Dever for Mayor Committee released a statement explaining why Thompson always seemed to "rant about royalty. Some think it is due to a brainstorm, but we don't. We think it is because he hopes to win German and Irish votes and raise class distinction[s] in the minds of workingmen who he thinks hate the very mention of kings." Thompson was posing "as a friend of the masses and the foe of the rich." But there was no time left to change course. At best committee members could brace for the crash.³⁶

It came soon enough—and left Thompson the winner over Dever 516,000 to 433,000; Robertson polled another 51,000. In 1923 Dever carried the African-American, Italian, and Jewish vote; he now lost them to Thompson. Groups that were usually solid Democrats gave Thompson 41 (Czech), 43 (Lithuanian), and 46 (Pole) percent of their vote; Germans and

Swedes went for him by over 60 percent. Democrats had overestimated the appeal of race prejudice; class, ethnicity, and Prohibition counted for more. Thompsonites sang as much when they crowded into the Louis XVI Room of the Hotel Sherman. The celebrants turned "Bye-Bye Blackbird" into "Bye-Bye Dever." 37

The disheartened could always blame Dever's loss on Al Capone, as long as they did not mind ignoring reality. Organized crime obviously preferred Thompson to Dever. The gangster Jack Zuta contributed a reported \$50,000 to the campaign and held a membership in the William Hale Thompson Republican Club. "I'm for Big Bill hook, line and sinker," Zuta bragged, "and Bill's for me hook, line and sinker." 38

But gangsters did not determine major elections on their own, at least not in the nation's second largest city. Politicians held that distinction, along with the electorate. Had it been otherwise, Al Capone would have willed Thompson to victory in 1931. Perhaps Thompson knew he had the support of criminals, but that knowledge did not stop him from seeking everyone else's.

The political mercenary had performed at his intuitive best in fashioning a simultaneous appeal to alienation and inclusion. Unlike his opponents, Thompson knew the demographics. WASP Chicago had long passed into history. A vestige remained with the business community, but the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award succeeded only in uniting the many against the few.

The new city was filled with groups carrying deeply rooted resentments, against the Landis Award and more. So Thompson learned to talk class, ethnicity, and race, directly and otherwise. He did not merely entertain with his threats against King George—he encouraged the fantasies of listeners who felt they had tyrants enough in their lives. While reality did not permit them to strike out at enemies, they could still punch their vote for Big Bill Thompson.

The former mayor received two prominent callers within days of the election; since 1920 national Republicans had cared less about the content of Thompson's politics than his ability to win votes. Senator Smith Brookhart came to discuss farm relief, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover to pay a courtesy call on a politician capable of threatening his presidential ambitions. Thompson was again at the center of attention, and he planned to take full advantage. The victory had rekindled old ambitions that carried beyond city hall. This time they were accompanied by a rare interest in political details. Within a year Thompson would build a prototype city machine and national protest movement.³⁹

He would not repeat the mistakes made in his 1918 Senate campaign. That intention explained the presence of William Lorimer, who had resurfaced during the campaign as an advisor to Thompson. The protégé finally was ready to apply his mentor's belief in coalition politics. Issues from the spring election showed Thompson intent on adding to his black support; his appointments would do the same. He had identified two target groups. The first was organized labor.

Michael J. Kelly, president of the Wage Earners' League, was made director of labor for the board of education; Edward F. Moore, another Wage Earner and president of the Hoisting Engineers, became deputy commissioner of public works and head of patronage for the administration. Oscar F. Nelson, alderman and vice-president of the CFL, already had switched parties and served as Thompson's floor leader in the city council. What emerged, the political scientist James W. Errant wrote in 1939, was "the great politico-labor machine."

Labor leaders who had opposed Thompson in the election were now asking for jobs and favors. Both John Fitzpatrick and Victor Olander recommended people to the board of education; in addition Olander made job requests at the health department, library board, and department of public works. Reformers always had condemned this type of arrangement without comprehending its appeal. The sponsor, the pol, the connection with clout—these were facts of life for the average Chicagoan. They were the powers who hired and fired or found ways to influence the workings of a court. Thompson showed he too understood that world.⁴¹

Chicago was, in fact as well as reputation, a city of neighborhoods, filled with families and friends. Reformers never saw that politics worked best on that same, personal, level. Jane Addams and Charles Merriam knew civil service, but the concerns of someone like Chicago policeman James Barrowman totally escaped them.

Barrowman began writing his friend John H. Walker in November 1927. Walker was president of the Illinois Federation of Labor. Like John Fitzpatrick, he once thought labor's day had come in the wake of war's end; as testament, Walker ran for governor on the 1920 Labor ticket. He knew Barrowman from childhood; the two had worked together in the coal mines of downstate Spring Valley. Barrowman asked Walker for help in getting a promotion because "examinations and promotions sometimes are handled in a peculiar way." 42

Walker contacted Thompson, who forwarded the request to Police Chief Michael Hughes. Civil Service Commission President Thomas J. Huston also promised Walker to "intercede for your chum." Barrowman got what he wanted: "Well, the list has been posted, and I must say I am more than satisfied as I am 66[th] on it and 39 have been promoted already, leaving me 27[th] as the list now stands." When the promotion came through, Barrowman admitted to Walker, "I expected some overtures [for money] but nothing was said, so I guess I am lucky."⁴³

Perhaps Barrowman was; most jobs required some form of quid pro quo. Yet kickbacks and precinct work never fostered the demand for change. Patronage meant an alternative to factory work in blue-collar Chicago, and it gave unions access to city hall jobs in exchange for votes, counted not in hundreds but hundreds of thousands. Thompson found that politician, public employee, and union all benefited in the process. Democrats would put his discovery to work over the next four decades.

Thompson wanted the support of ethnic groups along with that of blacks and labor. A week after the election, he offered the post of assistant city treasurer to Matthew S. Szymczak, the losing Democratic candidate for city treasurer. Szymczak had been slated by George Brennan to prevent the defection of Polish voters. Brennan unintentionally proved the diminishing returns of Irish-first politics: Szymczak outpolled Dever by three thousand votes. Although Szymczak declined to switch parties, Thompson continued to work on broadening his political base.⁴⁴

He received help from an unwitting source, William McAndrew. The school superintendent had continued his alienating ways by committing the political faux pas of using a nonunion school print shop to reproduce election material for Mayor Dever. Given Thompson's election-night promise to fire him, McAndrew had warning to resign. He refused, and the situation festered until August, when the school board took action.

Technically, McAndrew was charged with insubordination for refusing to hire school clerks from civil service lists. The more pertinent interests of the board were outlined in a series of additional charges filed by member James A. Hemingway. McAndrew was accused of disloyalty and an "insolent and domineering" attitude. The board focused on the former while McAndrew demonstrated the latter. Attending hearings early on, he either slept or read the newspaper; later, he stopped coming altogether.⁴⁵

The hearings suggested another Scopes trial, but without the monkey. Witnesses included John J. Gorman and Frederick Bausman, respectively former Illinois congressman and supreme court justice from Washington State. Gorman called one of the high school history texts "utterly unfit" for students "unless we would have them grow into British subjects." Bausman meanwhile warned against an old though not necessarily trustworthy ally: "England beguiled us into war, took all the spoils of it and

did not want to pay her debts." Baltimore's H. L. Mencken was asked to testify in October. Mencken sent his regrets, along with a compliment to Thompson on the "good show" he was putting on.⁴⁶

However, the show could turn serious—as with the December appearance by seventeen teachers, principals, and assistant superintendents. One witness testified, "School teaching under the three years of the McAndrew regime was what Sherman called war; but for the last three months, since his suspension, it has been heaven."⁴⁷

The assessment was not lost on Thompson. He had once tried to break the Chicago Teachers' Federation; now he fought a superintendent hostile to federation members. Earlier, he had allowed whispering campaigns to exploit the Catholicism, real or imagined, of opponents. By his third term he realized that predominantly Catholic ethnic groups could decide any election. So midway through the McAndrew proceedings, he instructed the school board to give "special deserved attention" particularly to Polish, German, and Irish Revolutionary War heroes.

He described Casimir Pulaski and Thaddeus Kosciuszko as "Polish noblemen who made magnificent records in the American Revolution, the former giving up his life in the cause of freedom, but [whose] deeds have been wiped out of Anglicized school history." Some things Thompson could not change. Chicago ethnic groups were not much welcome on the North Shore except by way of the service entrance; but a mayor, if he so chose, could give them more prominent billing in the history books. And, along with teachers, they could get a popular replacement for McAndrew from within the system. In 1928 William J. Bogan became the first Catholic to serve as Chicago school superintendent.⁴⁸

Thompson opened a second front against things un-American in October 1927. He instructed U. J. "Sport" Herrmann, a friend and library board member, to hunt out British propaganda in the library system. Herrmann promised to "burn every book in that there library that's pro-British." Head librarian Carl Roden was powerless beyond noting: "I am employed by him and the rest of the [library] board, of which he is a member." 49

Again, the political mercenary attacked at precisely the right place. McAndrew allowed him to compromise the Irish leadership of the Democratic party and reach out to the party's Catholic and labor voters. The book campaign was geared to do the same while drawing isolationist support from across the nation. Critics, though, refused to give credit where due.

From the vantage of midtown Manhattan, the New York Times wondered how Thompson would ever recognize the contributions of such groups as the Dutch, Norwegians, Swedes, and Huguenots without inevitably offending. "The friends of peace must take a lesson from the unachieved project of Mr. Gladstone's first government for an Irish University," an editorial recalled. "There was to be no university teacher of history." The *Times* then advised, "Instead of throwing this and that history of the United States out, throw them all out!" ⁵⁰

Thompson wanted the exact opposite—to offer an all-inclusive history in the schools for advantage at the polls. In December he met with a group representing the Chippewa, Oneida, Sioux, and Winnebago nations. Their request was sincere, to "please see that the truth is told about the first Americans." Because it was Thompson (who posed in headdress), because it was Chicago, and because it could be made to appeal to readers' prejudice, the *Minneapolis Times* discarded the serious for the lighthearted. "Indians Open War on Propaganda in 'Paleface' History," read the wire story.⁵¹

Ethnic appeals continued long after Thompson retired. During the 1936 elections, Carter Harrison II wrote James Farley on the readiness of plaques commemorating Kosciuszko, Lafayette, and von Steuben. In a letter marked "personal and confidential," Harrison predicted chances "are very favorable for the unveiling ceremonies to take place in October, if that meets with your approval." The federal courthouse downtown would serve as the site for the ceremonies, Harrison reported to Farley in September. "Will it be possible to get a message from the President paying tribute to these three illustrious men?" the former mayor asked.⁵²

The Roosevelt administration complied with high praise for all three "valiant heroes, each of whom typifies the distinct contribution which his country made" in achieving American independence, and their respective ethnic groups, who continued to make important contributions to national life. "The plaques thus link the past with the present and emphasize the cosmopolitan character of our population and the diversity in origin of those who today uphold the American ideal of government and citizenship." Such comments had become familiar, popular, and expected in Chicago politics. 53

Thompson was not content merely to show Democrats the way to a good machine. He was also the Depression demagogue come early, with a seemingly unassailable plan for prosperity and an isolationist foreign policy to safeguard the United States from Europe. And like those who followed, he broadcasted the message by radio. While the Stock Market Crash lay in the future, Thompson already was exploiting the political fallout.

Nature played a supporting role. As part of his election celebration, Thompson chartered two steamboats to take five hundred guests for a trip down the Mississippi. The trip coincided with the great spring floods of 1927. After regular stops to offer help (and generate publicity), Thompson and his party arrived in New Orleans, where he announced plans for a Mississippi Valley flood control conference. The Burnham Plan was about to go regional.⁵⁴

The conference took place in Chicago that June. Senators Smith Brookhart, Pat Harrison, and Henrik Shipstead attended, as did Secretary of War Dwight F. Davis; Speaker of the House Nicholas Longworth posed alongside Thompson for a photograph in the *Herald-Examiner*. Ten years earlier, Longworth's father-in-law Theodore Roosevelt called Thompson "a disaster to the Republican Party." Times had changed.⁵⁵

"Don't scatter," directed a pamphlet for the conference. "Shoot at Bull's Eye for American Prosperity." The target illustration consisted of national flood control legislation "to prevent disasters"; inland waterways "to double exports"; farm relief; and, in the center, America First. The conference led to the creation of a permanent committee chaired by Thompson. 56

Flood control then spread east, as Thompson met with Calvin Coolidge in Washington, with additional meetings held in early November. This time Thompson brought along a delegation of one thousand. With the bookburning controversy barely two weeks old, Coolidge breakfasted with Thompson and some of his entourage (including the once-outcast William Lorimer) at the White House. Republicans were reluctant to attack a maverick who was ambitious and, above all, popular. Thompson again presaged Joseph McCarthy. 57

Thompson spent the late summer on a speaking tour of the Great Plains and the West. "My mission is to arouse you to the danger which flood[ing] presents to our prosperity," he told a St. Paul audience at the Minnesota State Fair; flood control was nothing less than the "gospel of America." There were stops in Omaha to receive a chamber of commerce endorsement of flood control and in Denver to support construction of Boulder Dam. The tour ended on the West Coast. "This is the hour set aside," announced San Francisco mayor James Rolph Jr., "for paying official welcome to one of the foremost figures in American public life." 58

Thompson was again transformed in the columns of a Hearst paper: "At first there were no cheers," reported the *San Francisco Examiner*. "The assemblage seemed too deeply moved [by Thompson's speech on flood control]. Then as the speaker stirred to sit down, the guests arose as one man and burst into an acclaim that reached to the outposts of California Street." The speech was followed by a visit to San Simeon. ⁵⁹

The Chicago police quartet accompanied Thompson and sang his new song, "America, First, Last and Always." (Verse one—"America first and last and always! / Our hearts are loyal, our faith is strong. / America first and last and always! / Our shrine and homeland, though right or wrong.") In Chicago the *Herald-Examiner* gave curious readers a vicarious sense of Hearst hospitality: There was Thompson and friends spending "a day of wonders and thrills" at Hearst's estate "in the mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean at San Simeon." The police quartet sang at dinner; Thompson joined friends for a swim in the marble pool; and visions of great power danced in the heads of publisher and politician alike.⁶⁰

The guest earned his visit. For seven years Thompson had served as Hearst's Chicago politician. When Hearst supported Hiram Johnson and municipal ownership or opposed the World Court, so did William Hale Thompson. Critics were right—the politician was "bought," not by a gangster but by a newspaper publisher who paid off in inches of column space.

The *Herald-Examiner* defended the library antipropaganda drive and even suggested an alternative to book-burning: "The library, for instance, retains many books which deal with the psychological and physiological problems of sex in a propagandistic fashion. But it does not lend these books out freely. It surrounds their circulation with restrictions." The same could be done for other "books the reading of which might well distort half-formed ideas of certain minds." ⁶¹

Hearst also supported Thompson on the matter of America First. In a signed editorial Hearst wrote, "Those that laugh at Mayor Thompson's desire to keep the spirit of patriotism alive in our country are either very unpatriotic themselves or they are very dull and thoughtless." Thompson was performing a noble effort "worthy of emulation in other cities and other states." Hearst continued, "As a matter of fact, the crusade to have American children taught American history, and not foreign propaganda, is not confined to Chicago and to Illinois." Similar efforts were occurring in New York, California, and five other states. Hearst could only hope "the movement will spread to all the states." He then suggested a way to accomplish that: Get rid of the "laughing jackasses" and "replace these clowns with thoughtful Americans like Mayor Thompson, who understand the necessity of maintaining American ideals in the minds of our American children, the American citizens of the future."62

Hearst addressed himself "to the editor of the Chicago Herald and Examiner" and on the East Coast "to the editor of the Baltimore American." The editorial was identical in both cities since it was meant for the same audience—readers who liked the Hearst style in photographs (women smil-

ing, their skirts above the knee), comics (the provocative Tillie the Toiler rather than the *Tribune*'s sublime Gasoline Alley), and the alternative set of villains and heroes.

Hearst equipped his political favorites to withstand the attacks of a *Tribune* or a *New York Times* behind the shield of an *Examiner* or an *American*. Readers were encouraged to judge a politician by friends and enemies, *Examiners* and *Tribunes*. During the 1920s Chicagoans tended to prefer Hearst's image of Thompson to Robert McCormick's.⁶³

That image was often on stage the ten months following the mayoral election. In August Thompson performed on Big Bill Day for the association of commerce rodeo at Soldier Field. As guest of honor, he rode up to the microphone on horseback, waved his Stetson, and worked a lariat. But he did not venture an opinion on the quality of American justice as others would that day of Sacco and Vanzetti's execution. Instead, he appeared as the Wild West patriot who just two days before had donated \$25,000 (raised mostly by Chicago schoolchildren) for the restoration of the USS Constitution. A month later, the patriot played host for boxing's Dempsey-Tunney fight. The long-count and victory went to Gene Tunney, along with an invitation from Thompson to live in Chicago.⁶⁴

Thompson's popularity was at its peak. When an impromptu parade greeted him on his return from the West Coast, the *Herald-Examiner* dutifully reported, "Shouts of making the mayor a candidate for President echoed" in the reception room at the Hotel Sherman. Thompson never publicly commented on his chances. He was too busy publicizing the merits of another term for Calvin Coolidge—and, since that was unlikely, engineering his own grass-roots campaign through the America First Foundation. 65

"Will you join in the establishment of the America First Foundation, a national organization for better citizenship?" Thompson asked in a telegram sent three days before Halloween 1927. Thompson contacted all governors, members of Congress, and mayors of cities with populations over twenty thousand. The proposal was "based on loyalty and patriotism, with a nationwide educational program to teach the Constitution of the United States and respect for our form of government . . . and to build the coming generation, native and foreign-born, into sturdy defenders of American ideals." The only requirement was a ten-dollar membership fee. 66

"I am with you for the upholding and maintaining of the Constitution of the United States," William Borah telegraphed, "including the Eighteenth Amendment." University of Michigan president Clarence Cook Little responded in December, with less subtlety: "My chief detailed regret in looking over your literature is that Washington's Farewell Address and

not yours was enclosed." Such lack of enthusiasm did not keep the foundation from beginning operations in October.⁶⁷

America First used a downtown office to distribute literature explaining ways "to train the American youth in correct principles of government and citizenship, to inculcate in them responsibility and respect for constituted authority and to develop the mind of the alien along patriotic American lines." By February 1928 the foundation claimed to have organized thirty-four citizenship classes for nearly two thousand students at factories, community centers, and evening schools. Another five thousand students in high school ROTC received America First literature. They may have been the interest of school board member H. Wallace Caldwell, who served on the foundation's executive council.⁶⁸

The foundation served two purposes. The first, obviously, was publicity. Anything accomplished enhanced the reputation of America First's creator. Further, the organization deflected criticism in the same way public works always had. If Thompson wrapped himself in the Constitution and demanded regional flood control (along with farm relief), he might improve his reputation outside Chicago; if everything worked, he might even lay the image of Kaiser Bill to rest. There was no harm in trying.

America First also broadcast weekly over the radio. The medium had intrigued Thompson since its early use at the Pageant of Progress. After his second term, he invested in radio station WHT, which he offered to make available to the Chicago Federation of Labor; a CFL report noted Thompson "strongly favors the idea." With Thompson reelected, the station announced plans for broadcasting "America-First" lectures into the public schools. At an estimated cost of \$1 million, every classroom was to be equipped with a speaker to carry programs on citizenship, Thompson-style.⁶⁹

Although the school broadcasts never materialized, the foundation did make headway outside Chicago with an office in New Orleans. Thompson had been popular there since his South Seas venture. He mixed the small gesture with the grand, building his boat with Louisiana cypress and sketching a region's future. "What the Pageant of Progress did for Chicago, the opening of the Chicago-New Orleans waterway will do for the entire Mississippi Valley," he told a business luncheon while visiting in 1924. "What the Michigan Boulevard project meant to our property values, the waterway improvement will mean for property values throughout the valley. This is New Orleans' opportunity." 70

City and state politicians agreed. Flood control brought together Thompson and New Orleans mayor Arthur O'Keefe. As Congress considered a

major flood control bill in early 1928, O'Keefe welcomed Thompson for a weekend of talks and appearances. Thompson also met with governor-elect Huey P. Long. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* reported, "Mr. Long declared that after an acquaintance of only two hours with Mayor Thompson, he had discovered that the latter is too good a Democrat to be a Republican, and that he is too musical and hospitable to have been born north of the Mason and Dixon Line."

When the Senate acted on flood control, which was sponsored in the House by Thompson ally Frank Reid, Long wired congratulations and predicted, "Without doubt your able leadership and help will carry this bill" to passage. The Kingfish had found a friend, the only dignitary outside of Long himself to speak at his inauguration.⁷²

This comeback, with Thompson poised to play a major role in the 1928 Republican Convention, begged analysis. Very few politicians had careers that allowed them to close saloons, condemn Prohibition, act like Theodore Roosevelt, and befriend Huey Long. But the *Tribune* and *Daily News* were too exhausted and humiliated. There seemed nothing for respectable Chicago to do other than see, as the *Daily News* said it would following the election, "if by his coming administration he proves that his official faults of the past taught him wisdom." Extended commentary was left to others.⁷³

Thompson had again rendered Chicago into civic metaphor, so there was no lack of commentary. Miami advised through its *News:* "If Chicago would strip itself to a simple businesslike system, the 'invisible government' which works through a Thompson would be forced into the open or out of politics." A different lesson came from Portland, Maine, where the *Press Herald* stressed the role of African Americans. "Thompson was then their mayor [during the war]. He segregated them, helped to debauch them and made them his tools."⁷⁴

Enid, Oklahoma, also detected villains at work in Chicago, but the *News* blamed another group: "Sicilian gunmen came into Chicago and made it their headquarters." The *Newark News* seemed resigned: "If Thompson is the kind of mayor Chicago wants, that is the kind of mayor she should have. She deserves him." The *Louisville Post* warned, "Ephraim Is Joined to His Idols." ⁷⁵

Opinion was by no means unanimous. "The Chicago mayoralty election demonstrated once again the fact that in this country you cannot deliver either the labor or the church vote," the *Topeka Capital* argued. "The 'Holier Than Thou' element of Chicago Republicans," the *Durango Herald* observed, "didn't cut much ice in the election yesterday."

A second Colorado paper, the Fort Collins Express, agreed: "The people of Chicago rose up and ousted the Dever administration, which has been such a lawless administration. It even got too bad for Chicago people." Above all there was Hearst, presenting Thompson as others did his opponents: the mayor-elect was "one of the picturesque and vital men in American politics" whose two terms were "a golden age for Chicago" marked by numerous public works. Hearst's Thompson was a leader who "taught Chicago to be proud of itself." New York or San Francisco, American or Examiner, the editorial ran exactly the same, down to the congratulations and greetings extended.⁷⁶

Thompson's image also remained constant in the South beyond New Orleans. "Lessons" from 1919 resurfaced as election analysis. The Atlanta Constitution reported that in Chicago "crime and politics are said to be so closely allied that many of the oldest residents do not know them apart." Page-one headlines were hard to ignore: "Thompson Defeats Dever in Election Featured by Riots/War-Time Mayor Is Named for Third Time by Chicago Voters in Colorful Battle/RELIGIOUS AND RACE HATREDS REVEALED/Negro Vote Plays Big Part; Hoodlum Gunmen and Terrorists Keep Policemen Busy." The Tribune also had emphasized the crime riot potential of the election and ran a photo of police officers equipped with machine guns as proof "Police Ready to Curb Election Violence." An election-day admission that "The opening of the polls set a record for an almost total lack of disorder" did not appear in the Constitution.⁷⁷

Dever lost because of Prohibition, and Thompson won with "the enormous negro vote in that city—the largest in proportion to population of that of any city in America." For years blacks from across the nation had "flocked to Chicago by the thousands," and the South Side "was practically turned over" to them. In a total misreading of the campaign, the Constitution charged Thompson won the black vote by promising to remove "the alien labor element by negro labor. Few of the aliens vote—few in a great city like Chicago are even naturalized. Politically, he had the winning side of the argument." Atlanta understood Chicago no better than it had in 1919.⁷⁸

Accuracy mattered less than Chicago again serving the South as a symbol for all that was wrong in modern society. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal* warned that Thompson may have promised too much; this possibility "is by no means reassuring to those persons throughout the country who have nothing but the best of wishes for Chicago despite her own perverseness." With luck "the sensible leaders of the city's large negro colo-

ny will not get an exaggerated idea of their position and importance. If the triumph of their favorite puts foolish notions into the heads of the negroes the results may be most unfortunate."⁷⁹

The Commercial Appeal considered "The Negro in Politics" in a Sunday editorial following the Chicago election. Democratic race-baiting meant "the negro as a political factor of first importance is almost as little welcomed in Chicago as such a thing would be in Mississippi." The editorial proposed to confront "the crux of the whole race problem." It centered on the idea of equality, both political and social. Equality would not come about "until all racial lines are destroyed by intermarriage. But such a thing as racial intermarriage is absolutely unthinkable down here and, to a large extent also, in all other sections of the country. So, it must appear the ultimate aim of the movement inaugurated in Chicago is impossible of attainment." African Americans were advised instead to maintain their belief in God. Faith promised more than Clarence Darrow, an agnostic and "champion of full equality of the negro with the white race." 80

Magazines attempted a more complete picture of Thompson. Collier's sent the veteran journalist William Allen White, who made a quick study of the city. White could not properly identify the state's attorney (Pat Crowe for Robert) or the date of the 1919 race riot (before rather than after Thompson's second election). He did, however, sound authoritative on Chicago and its old-new mayor.

The secret lay in the politician's eyes: "His eyes give a certain puerile character to his face. This bland, blithe, deceptive puerility makes it clear why he attracts and holds for a time with passionate loyalty the millions who follow him. They are worshipping Pan!" As for his followers (the ranks of whom apparently remained unchanged from 1915 to 1927), "This group—that crowds the parks, fills the movie palaces, howls at the ballgames, blisters on the beaches, works hard, plays hard, dreams little and aspires not at all beyond the glittering substantial horizon of the day's physical demands and the morrow's physical betterment—saw in Big Bill the Builder, in his cowboy hat and his yachting cap, their supercinema hero, a blending into reality of Bill Hart, Valentino and the acrobatic Douglas Fairbanks. He spoke their language because he understood their hearts."81

The portrait emerged complete with the contrast of Dever to Thompson. Dever was the good man "loyal to his city" who suffered the misfortune of building up "in the heart of the moron multitude the idea that he was a cold-blooded, sharp-witted, merciless enemy of democratic institutions." Thompson was something less, a man who "preached hate wherever he could, realizing instinctively that men of a certain type—a low type

to be sure, but forming a large bloc numerically—voted according to their resentments rather than their convictions."82

White described Thompson's relationship with African Americans: "He courted the colored vote in the black belt. And he gave the colored leaders of the black belt the kind of government they wanted, the kind of government that pleased the henchmen of the black bosses—a wide-open black town." The Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award did not figure into the picture any more than William McAndrew's treatment of teachers and their "output" did. Chicago was ruled by a mob led by a politician/movie star. That the supposed matinee idol weighed in at about 250 pounds was one of a number of facts that got in the way.⁸³

White explained Thompson to readers who used Emporia or Muncie as a measure of civic conduct. Kate Sargent preferred a mix of Freud and Balzac—"Life cannot go on without much forgetting"—to reach a more sophisticated audience. Thompson endured, Sargent stressed in a two-part series for *The Forum*, because he made Chicago forget: "The Great Hypnotist had done his work. As everyone knows, hypnotism is most successful with a willing subject. Big Bill knew his Chicago. He had an extraordinary understanding of mob psychology. This gift, in a man unhampered by scruple, is sheer sorcery." Sargent was much impressed with "his powers. Those powers are not intellectual, they are divination, pure and simple. It is the mob that has the mind of a 12–year old boy, and Big Bill knew it." His politics were geared to "the great collective boy, the mob, [that] loves a parade or circus. It loves to carry a banner and shout a war-whoop. In the parade it wants a hero to carry on its shoulders; in the circus, a clown to make it laugh and forget the cares of the day."84

Although Sargent shared White's fascination for the mob, she was not reminded of Rudolph Valentino. The illustrations for her second article—green and black scissor-cuts of Thompson, a Wells Street alley, the lakefront, and Michigan Avenue—were starkly Expressionist. This Chicago could have been the setting for *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, featuring not movie heroes but fiends.⁸⁵

Other writers found different story angles for their subject. Victor S. Yarros mocked Thompson in *The Independent* for always telling the truth. "He is never willfully untruthful or unfair. The monstrous and silly charges that he makes he really believes in, being incapable of real thought." John B. Stone could not place the dates of any Thompson election, though he was sure Thompson performed as "the greatest showman on earth." Stone also speculated in *Plain Talk* on a Thompson trip to Valhalla, where he would meet such worthies as Hercules, Beowulf, Goliath, Siegfried, and

Jack the Giant Killer. Even surrounded by that company, the newcomer would have his retinue sing "America First, Last and Always." 86

In Harper's, Elmer Davis put forward a partial defense: "Certainly New York can point no finger of scorn; New York would probably have gone on re-electing [John] Hylan so long as Tammany had gone on nominating him, and Thompson to me seems 10 times as clever as Hylan." One particularly extreme assessment appeared in Century Magazine:

The trouble may be with democracy. Town hall democracy is no more. It was a government of personal communication based on the fellowship of a neighborhood. In the great city the neighborhood has vanished so only the form of democracy survives, inhabited by a different kind of fellowship, generally the gang. The gang steps in when democracy becomes impersonal, institutionalized and when city life becomes complex and involved. It becomes a mystery to all but experts and politicians who make the manipulation of government a professional pursuit. It is called government by machine. That is essentially what has come to power with Thompson. His election is the triumph of the gang.

The author was Nels Anderson, a product of the University of Chicago sociology department.⁸⁷

Only *The New Republic* offered anything approaching a balanced picture. Refusing to invoke "the Mencken formula" and decry the "collection of unfeathered bipeds, mostly boobs or crooks" who elected Thompson, the magazine focused on the growing importance of ethnic groups in the American city. They were not just a mob to be exploited. "When the Chicago half-world rejoices at the selection of Big Bill Thompson, it is this new [immigrant-descended] society which is celebrating its victory over the respectability, the alien conventions, the moral self-importance and the exclusiveness of the older Chicago." While these people voted for a Thompson or a Hylan in one election, they also were capable of voting "with even more rejoicing for Al Smith at the next. They are not so much opposed to good government as they are to the exclusive gentlemen who conspicuously favor it, and to the repressive objects which puritanical government often proposes."88

The Nation was less generous. William J. Flynn dismissed the election with "The old cry of the Roman mob rises—'Panem et circenses'—and the Big Boy is swept into office on a tidal wave of half a million votes. For this is the land of Barnum, William Jennings Bryan, and Aimee Semple McPherson."89

A later article detailed precinct work in the 1928 Republican primary. Oswald Garrison Villard explained in a note, "The writer, whose identity

must be protected, was one of 200 University of Chicago students who volunteered to act as watchers at the polls in some of the worst wards... to [help] ensure an honest election in Chicago. This article bears eloquent testimony in one ward." The testimony revealed a problem other than political corruption: "The Nth Ward contains many Negroes and some Jews. The result is a Jewish management of Negroes, who in many cases are so ignorant they cannot read or write their own names. In this precinct the Board of Election was composed of three Jewish men, one Jewish woman and one Negro woman." One Republican election judge was "a shyster by trade" and his Democratic counterpart "a very loud-mouthed Jewish woman." The Republican was identified as Levinsky, who since he "could not imagine anyone being such a fool as to want an honest election," tried to bribe the author. When the student warned a black policeman of possible trouble, the officer allegedly replied, "Boss, I ain't taken no sides, I ain't, an' I can handle anything that happens." "90"

Something about Thompson did in fact bring out the Mencken in observers, as *The New Republic* suggested; Chicago's mayor did not encourage faith in democracy. For cynics, Thompson showed that Carl Sandburg had misjudged "the people"; they were no more than "homo boobiens" after all. Such prejudice was not confined to William Allen White or *The Nation*.

The June 1927 issue of the Mississippi Valley Historical Review noted that the past was never dead "as long as there is anyone among the living who finds any conceivable reason for resurrecting it." The attempt to bring ethnicity to the American Revolution involved people with "such names as Teichmann, O'Toole, O'Riordan, Smulski, McGarry and Sieszynski, all, apparently, residents of Chicago. That so many historical authorities of renown should be found in a single city speaks well for the culture of the metropolis of our unsalted seas." Following the McAndrew/history controversy, the Review asked, "Why, then, the emphasis on these particular wars [the Revolution and the War of 1812] and upon a handful of characters of obvious non-English origin?" The answer reflected poorly on journal and profession: "The factor last noted is, of course, the Ethiopian in this particular woodpile." "91

Thompson was too busy to bother with his reviews. By February 1928 he had made sixteen trips totaling fifteen thousand miles in three months; he traveled to make himself a player in presidential politics, either as broker or candidate. "Sixty-four percent of the Delegates to the National Conventions reside in the Mississippi Valley," a pamphlet for the flood-control conference advised participants.

Nationally, Thompson hoped to gain support through his America First Bull's Eye; at home, he posed as the visionary who endorsed airport construction and plans for the 1933 World's Fair. With luck he would emerge as a possible presidential candidate, at the least a power to respect during the GOP convention.⁹²

The New York Times accidentally aided the cause with publication of Thompson's "Shall We Shatter the Nation's Idols in School Histories?" in its magazine, Current History. Indiana senator James E. Watson then had the Government Printing Office reprint the article as a pamphlet for mail distribution. Publicity from the various America First activities and yet another lunch with Coolidge to discuss flood control pointed to a politician on the rise.⁹³

However, these best-laid plans were destroyed by the 1928 Republican primary. Thompson had reconciled with Len Small and Robert Crowe, both of whom were seeking nomination for third terms. The plan was for Thompson to mobilize the black, ethnic, and labor votes that had elected him in 1927. This time he failed to deliver, much as Charles Deneen and Edward Brundage had the spring before.

Thompson's organization was a slap-dash creation, needing time to develop, but Thompson was in too great a hurry. He realized his mistake too late. There was no guarantee that class and ethnicity or water meters and King George could be made to work for other candidates. So faction continued to balance faction in 1920s Chicago politics, victory in one race tempered by defeat in another. This give-and-take would continue until a way was found to enforce absolute party and voter discipline.

The primary also coincided with a shift in voter sentiment on the South Side. For thirteen years Thompson had encouraged black political aspirations; both Oscar DePriest and Louis Anderson emerged as community leaders because Thompson utilized them in the city council. By 1928 black voters had progressed beyond simple gratitude to a white politician or satisfaction over electing an alderman. Sentiment was spreading that it was time for an African American from the North to be in Congress.

That belief fed the ambitions of at least one candidate. "By birth, training and experience I am better fitted than any of the candidates now in the field," William L. Dawson announced. Dawson noted "the present congressman does not even live in the district. He is a white man. Therefore, for those two reasons, if no others, he can hardly voice the hopes, ideals and sentiment of the majority of this district." ⁹⁴

Thompson instead endorsed incumbent Martin Madden for personal and political reasons: Madden had been an ally since 1915, and he served as

chairman of the House Appropriations Committee; an inland waterway would be virtually impossible without his support. Thompson tried to explain himself before a group of black voters: "A Negro might go to Congress and after serving there for 20 years might become chairman of the powerful finance committee—perhaps he might—perhaps." Political caution had rendered the Second Lincoln into a Little Giant. 95

Small and Crowe could ill-afford the Madden-Dawson dispute. From 1920 to 1924 downstate was comfortable enough with one of its own as governor, but Small's second term no doubt disturbed small-town sensibilities. A new injunction-limitation law, opposition to weakening workers' compensation, a campaign promise to grant the prevailing wage on state public works—this was not how a native son of Kankakee was supposed to act. Crowe's problem was that he had become a politician without a constituency. Labor would not forgive his support of the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award while middle-class voters no longer remembered.

They were more concerned with crime: Every gangland murder in Chicago and Cook County since 1921 coincided with his administration. In 1926–27, 120 such killings occurred in Cook County, yet Crowe failed to secure a single conviction. One prominent victim of the machine gun was Assistant State's Attorney William McSwiggan, murdered in 1926. Crowe had no suspects—or reasons why his subordinate was visiting with two Cicero gangsters at the time of his death. In addition the state's attorney suffered from an embarrassing losing streak at the hands of Clarence Darrow: Fred Lundin, Leopold and Loeb, and Michael Faherty (indicted for his conduct as president of the Board of Local Improvements) all knew the value of a particular defense attorney.⁹⁶

The violence promised for the mayoral election arrived nine months later. In late January 1928, bombs went off at the homes of City Comptroller Charles Fitzmorris and Thompson advisor Dr. William H. Reid. Thompson's Sheridan Road apartment was placed under police guard after residents received calls indicating a bomb had been planted.

Seven weeks later, Deneen aide Joseph Esposito was shot to death, and five days after that, the homes of Deneen and John Swanson—his candidate for state's attorney—were bombed. In Washington, Senator George Norris observed, "It seems American property is sacred in Nicaragua and not Chicago." Norris suggested reassigning the marines so they could "protect American property at home." The move might have prevented the election-day murder of a second Deneen worker, Octavius Granady. 97

Thompson did not possess the coattails to stretch from one April to the next. The Second and Third Wards had given him 52,000 votes; while both

wards went to Crowe and Small, they generated nearly 30,000 fewer votes for each candidate. Labor and ethnic groups were just as underwhelmed by the Thompson ticket. Small and Crowe combined for nearly 125,000 votes fewer than Thompson in 1927. After eight years of editorials, the *Tribune* succeeded in retiring Small, who carried only 16 of 102 counties statewide. Crowe lost to Swanson by 200,000 votes. Voters had grown so disgusted with the primary violence they even sent a personal message to the big builder: A \$75 million bond issue for public works was rejected.⁹⁸

On the eve of the election, Thompson promised to resign if Crowe were defeated; he would be too busy defending himself against the new state's attorney. "I'll resign and ask President Coolidge to give me the federal patronage, and I'll appoint a district attorney who will do my fighting for me." Swanson's victory proved an embarrassment and yet another test of character. Thompson did not step down. Instead, he attempted to repair the political damage.⁹⁹

The first opportunity came with the sudden death of Martin Madden in late April; GOP committeemen from his congressional district then met to choose a replacement candidate for the general election. This time Thompson did not object to a African American running for Congress. Oscar DePriest was slated and in November became the first black congressman ever elected from the North.

In the city council aldermen passed a measure allowing small residences to continue paying a flat fee for water. And Thompson revived the Riverview excursion for school children. Students received copies of the Declaration of Independence to go with a picture of George Washington, inscribed "The First Man to Advocate 'America First.'" 100

Nationally, Calvin Coolidge gave the America First agenda a split. The president signed the \$325 million Jones-Reid flood control bill while vetoing the second McNarey-Haugen farm relief proposal. Thompson was in no position to complain. This time true to his word, he delivered thirteen votes for Coolidge at the GOP presidential convention in Kansas City. None of it, however, prevented the nomination of Herbert Hoover or an unfavorable decision by Judge Hugo Friend of the circuit court. Thompson and his codefendants were found personally liable for \$2.25 million in the *Tribune*'s real estate experts' suit.

With that something snapped, and Thompson suffered a nervous breakdown; he would not fully recover for two years. By then his notoriety had expanded to include responsibility for a gangland massacre and municipal bankruptcy. The less discerning also blamed him for the destruction of a political party.¹⁰¹

Notes

- 1. Chicago Defender, June 12, 1926, June 19, 1926. The reference to the tribal twenties is from John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1971), chap. 10.
 - 2. Chicago Defender, Apr. 12, 1919.
 - 3. Chicago Defender, Mar. 17, 1923, Apr. 7, 1923.
- 4. Chicago Defender, Feb. 2, 1924, Feb. 9, 1924, Feb. 16, 1924, Mar. 15, 1924; Chicago Tribune, Feb. 5, 1924. The number of black police officers reached 116 during Thompson's second term compared with 120 under Dever. Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 252. One of those appointed to the office of the corporation counsel was Earl B. Dickerson, later a strong critic of the Democratic machine's treatment of blacks. Charles Branham, "The Transformation of Black Political Leadership in Chicago, 1864–1942" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981), 395–96. For the corporation counsel, see also Chicago Tribune, Aug. 26, 1923; for Hall, see Gosnell, Negro Politicians, 201; copy of letter marked "Personal," Dever to the Reverend Archibald Carey, Oct. 18, 1924, box 6, William E. Dever Papers, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS); for the fire rumors, see Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 124.

Concerning black and tans, the *Chicago Defender* wrote, "We are heartily in favor of and strongly endorse the efforts of the new administration to rid Chicago of crime and vice in every form, provided the same is made applicable to all guilty persons, showing partiality to none." May 19, 1923.

- 5. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 21, 1926; Chicago Defender, Mar. 20, 1926.
- 6. Chicago Defender, Oct. 30, 1926.
- 7. For dissidents and for Brennan's remark, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 23, 1922.
- 8. For both wards, Brennan polled 7,218 votes to Smith's 23,060. Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1927, 743. For the primary slate breakdown, see Carroll Hill Wooddy, The Chicago Primary of 1926: A Study in Election Methods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 185.

Steven P. Erie argues that Thompson forced Chicago's Irish Democrats to court New Immigrant voters they were largely ignoring in other cities. Given the modest nature of that appeal, the situation probably verged on the extreme in places such as Boston and New York. Rainbow's End: Irish Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 102, 125–26.

- 9. Rosenwald quoted in John R. Schmidt, "The Mayor Who Cleaned Up Chicago": A Political Biography of William E. Dever (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 149.
 - 10. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 9, 1927.
 - 11. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 1, 1927.
 - 12. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 10, 1927.

- 13. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 15, 1927.
- 14. Ibid.
- 15. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 17, 1927.
- 16. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 24, 1927, Mar. 29, 1927.
- 17. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 3, 1923.
- 18. For Robins, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 22, 1927, Mar. 24, 1927; for further background, see Schmidt, *Dever*, 26–28, 42–43, and George F. Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958; reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1967), 184–85, 217–25; *Daily News*, Mar. 30, 1927, Mar. 31, 1927.

Robins was not the only reformer to attack Thompson. Donald Richberg linked him to Samuel Insull while Charles Merriam again attacked his war record. Appointed in 1915 by then-Alderman Merriam as a special counsel, Richberg fought to have Insull's People's Gas Company reduce its rates. The efforts, only marginally successful, cost the city \$400,000. The sum did not alarm the Chicago Tribune as did the fees for Thompson's real estate experts. For Richberg's charges, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Mar. 31, 1927; for Merriam's charges, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 26, 1927. See also Thomas E. Vadney, The Wayward Liberal: A Political Biography of Donald Richberg (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), 32–34.

- 19. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 28, 1927.
- 20. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 4, 1927; see also Chicago Herald-Examiner, Apr. 2, 1927. Thomas Donnelley's name appears as part of an Independent Republican ad in the Chicago Tribune on March 18 but not later, probably an indication that his was not an endorsement to impress traditional Democratic voters.
 - 21. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 30, 1927.
- 22. For the calliope, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 3, 1927; "Africa-First" cartoon, Prints and Photographs Collection (Graphics), CHS; for pranks, see William H. Stuart, *The Twenty Incredible Years* (Chicago: M. A. Donahue, 1935), 304–5; for Stuart's background, see *Who's Who in Chicago*, 1931.
- 23. For Litsinger's letter, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1927; Taylor to Rosenwald, Mar. 19, 1927, box 14, Dever file, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. The accuracy of Thompson's charge is open to debate. Both Brundage and Lundin could have maintained Chicago addresses while spending the bulk of their time outside the city. *Who's Who in Chicago*, 1926 lists Thompson with a posh Sheridan Road address.
- 24. For primary results, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 23, 1927; for the party unity pledge, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 26, 1927. The "old" Thompson did emerge with the image of Big Bill the Builder. A campaign song of the same name (with lyrics including "Who is the one, / Chicago's greatest son? / It's Big Bill the Builder!") constituted Thompson's sole appeal to the business community; the careful demagogue who sent signals was no more. Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 258.
 - 25. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 30, 1927.

- 26. Ibid.
- 27. Big Bill, the Builder, pamphlet in author's possession. The flat fee was based on the size of a building.
- 28. Speech of Mar. 31, 1927, Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library.
 - 29. Ibid.
 - 30. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 19, 1927.
- 31. For Rogers's observation, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 274; for Independent Republicans, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 19, 1927; for the opera club, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 1, 1927.
- 32. For Wage Earners, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 26, 1927; for Wage Earners' ad, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Apr. 2, 1927.

The endorsements by Fitzpatrick and Olander no doubt took considerable effort; both men were passionate defenders of the rights of labor. Even an indirect link to Republican business leaders had to be distasteful.

- 33. For Cossacks, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 23, 1927; for police relations, see James W. Errant, "Trade Unionism in the Civil Service of Chicago, 1895–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 118.
 - 34. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 1, 1927; speech of Mar. 31, 1927, Merriam Papers. 35. Ibid.
 - 36. Chicago Daily News, Mar. 28, 1927.
- 37. Vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1928, 762; ethnic percentages are based on two-party votes from John M. Allswang, *A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago*, 1890–1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), table 3:1, 42; for the victory rally, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 6, 1927. A group of Thompson supporters also celebrated on board an old ship in Belmont harbor; too much revelry caused the vessel to sink in six feet of water. Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 272–73.

Most treatments of the 1927 election stress the role of organized crime either in the campaign or in Thompson's third term. See Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill; John Bright, Hizzoner Big Bill Thompson: An Idyll of Chicago (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1930); Reinhard H. Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954); and George Schottenhamel, "How Big Bill Thompson Won Control of Chicago," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 45 (Spring 1952).

Arthur Thurner and John D. Buenker both note the importance of ethnicity in 1920s Chicago politics but reach different conclusions on 1927. Thurner generally credits Thompson with being a better Democrat than Dever. In contrast, Buenker charges, "His America First campaign in the 1927 mayoral race struck many ethnic group voters as a revival of nativism." Arthur W. Thurner, "The Impact of Ethnic Groups on the Democratic Party, 1920–1928" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1966), chap. 8; John D. Buenker, "Dynamics of Chicago Ethnic Politics, 1900–1930," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 67 (Apr. 1974): 198.

- 38. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 269.
- 39. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 9, 1927, Apr. 10, 1927.
- 40. For Lorimer, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 256; for Kelly's selection, see *Federation News*, Mar. 30, 1929; for Moore and quote, see Errant, "Trade Unionism," 170, 172. Mary J. Herrick charges that Thompson left the schools open to racketeer control. Jobs were politicized, but gangster influence is questionable. *The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 174–75.
 - 41. John Fitzpatrick Papers, CHS; Victor Olander Papers, CHS.
- 42. Barrowman-Walker correspondence, various dates, John H. Walker Papers, Illinois Historical Survey, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
 - 43. Ibid.
- 44. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 13, 1927; Edward R. Kantowicz, Polish-American Politics in Chicago, 1888–1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 179–80, 193.
- 45. For Thompson's promise, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Apr. 6, 1927; for McAndrew's campaigning, charges, and conduct, see Herrick, *Chicago Schools*, 166–69; for additional charges, see Chicago Board of Education, *Chicago Board of Education Proceedings*, Sept. 29, 1927.
- 46. For Gorman, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 14, 1927; for Bausman, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 20, 1927; for Mencken, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 19, 1927. Gorman was testifying against *The History of America* by David Saville Muzzey. The McAndrew proceedings also revealed that some of the books in question had been adopted during the earlier Thompson regime. *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 7, 1927.
 - 47. Chicago Tribune, Dec. 15, 1927; Chicago Daily News, Dec. 15, 1927.
- 48. For Thompson's letter, see George S. Counts, School and Society in Chicago (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1928; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1971), 280–83; for Bogan, see James W. Sanders, The Education of an Urban Minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1833–1965 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132. Mary Herrick offers grudging respect for Bogan in Chicago Schools, 225–27. During the election Democrats charged that Thompson's threats against King George actually were aimed at Cardinal George Mundelein, but by 1927 Thompson had no intention of alienating Catholic voters. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 267.

According to William Stuart, Bogan was Dever's first choice for superintendent in 1923. Dever supposedly changed his mind because he feared alienating WASP supporters. Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 188–89.

- 49. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 22, 1927.
- 50. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 289; New York Times, Nov. 20, 1927.
- 51. Chicago Tribune, Dec. 2, 1927; Minneapolis Times, Dec. 1, 1927.
- 52. Letter marked "personal and confidential," Harrison to Farley, Sept. 23, 1936, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Hyde Park, N.Y.
 - 53. Copy of Harrison to Farley, July 28, 1936, Carter Harrison IV Papers, New-

berry Library, Chicago; letter marked "personal and confidential," Harrison to Farley, Sept. 23, 1936 and copy of letter with ethnic group comments, Oct. 6, 1936, Roosevelt Papers. There are no newspaper accounts of the rally itself.

Harrison later wrote Farley, "Since the three tablets were placed in the court-house rotunda, a number of my 'Turkey' friends have been making bitter complaint that no recognition is given in the building to the [contributions of the] Green Isle." Copy marked "personal," Harrison to Farley, Dec. 22, 1936, Harrison Papers.

- 54. Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 324–25. According to a letter from Secretary of State (and future governor) Louis L. Emmerson to John Fitzpatrick of the CFL, both were among the five hundred celebrants. Emmerson to Fitzpatrick, July 6, 1927, Fitzpatrick Papers.
- 55. Roosevelt to Lodge, Sept. 4, 1918, Elton E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 8:1366–67.
- 56. For the conference, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, June 3–5, 1927; *Don't Scatter: Shoot at Bull's Eye for American Prosperity.* Both the pamphlet and the conference showed the influence of William Lorimer. During the mayoral campaign, Thompson made his old mentor an advisor, a role Lorimer continued in after the election. Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 256.
- 57. Chicago Herald-Examiner, June 11, 1927, Nov. 7, 1927, Nov. 9, 1927. Lorimer, Governor Len Small, and thirteen others joined Thompson at the White House.
 - 58. San Francisco Examiner, Sept. 13, 1927.
- 59. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Sept. 8–16, 1927; San Francisco Examiner, Sept. 13, 1927.
- 60. For the song, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 272; for the visit, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Sept. 15, 1927.
 - 61. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Oct. 27, 1927.
 - 62. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Nov. 7, 1927.
 - 63. The same editorial appeared in the Baltimore American, Nov. 5, 1927.
- 64. For the Big Bill Day ad, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 22, 1927; for the rodeo coverage, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 23, 1927, Chicago Tribune, Aug. 23, 1927; for the donation, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Aug. 21, 1927; for the offer to Tunney, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Sept. 25, 1927; for the parade, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Sept. 21, 1927.

Membership in Thompson's flood control conference carried at least one perquisite. An executive committee meeting was scheduled the day before the Dempsey-Tunney fight, and Thompson offered seats to members willing to stay over. The tickets were not free, however. Thompson to Walker, Aug. 24, 1927, Walker Papers.

- 65. For Thompson's parade, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept. 21, 1927; for support for Coolidge, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 8, 1927, Dec. 9, 1927, Mar. 20, 1928.
 - 66. Thompson to William Borah telegram, Oct. 28, 1927, Illinois Invitations,

William E. Borah Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

- 67. Borah to Thompson telegram, Oct. 29, 1927, Illinois Invitations, Borah Papers; for Little's response, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Dec. 16, 1927.
- 68. For background on the foundation, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 29, 1927; for the pamphlet, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1927; for the foundation's claims, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1928. Present at graduation ceremonies for two hundred employees of Illinois Bell Telephone were Rear Admiral Henry J. Ziegemier, commandant of the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, and Colonel Nathaniel F. McClure of the Sixth Corps Area. *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 26, 1928.
- 69. For the broadcasts, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1928; for the school proposal, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 9, 1927; "Report on Radiocasting for the Special Committee of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Illinois Federation of Labor," box 14, Fitzpatrick Papers.

As ever, Thompson was unable to attend to detail. A month before the school plans were announced, the Federal Radio Commission noted that WHT was "the only station in [the] country which has taken so little interest in its affairs" that it did not send a representative to proceedings on radio station scheduling conflicts. Copy of FRC to Thompson, Commerce Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.

- 70. For the New Orleans office, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1928; for the voyage, see *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Aug. 16, 1924; for the Chicago-New Orleans analogy, see *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Aug. 17, 1924.
 - 71. New Orleans Times-Picayune, Jan. 29, 1928, Feb. 3, 1928.
- 72. For Long's telegram, see New Orleans Times-Picayune, Mar. 30, 1928; for the inaugural, see Williams, Long, 286. Williams notes that at least one author has attempted to link Long with Capone through Thompson (286n.). The Times-Picayune called Thompson's April 1927 steamboat trip "a triumphal pilgrimage . . . in the interest of the Lakes-to-the-Gulf waterway." Apr. 18, 1927.
 - 73. Chicago Daily News, Apr. 6, 1927.
 - 74. Newspaper accounts in Dever Papers.
 - 75. Ibid.
- 76. Ibid.; New York American, Apr. 7, 1927; San Francisco Examiner, Apr. 8, 1927.
- 77. For the oldest residents remark and page-one headlines, see *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 4, 1927, Apr. 6, 1927; for the photo and admission, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 3, 1927, Apr. 5, 1927.
 - 78. Atlanta Constitution editorial, Apr. 7, 1927.
 - 79. Memphis Commercial Appeal, Apr. 7, 1927.
 - 80. Memphis Commercial Appeal editorial, Apr. 10, 1927.
- 81. William Allen White, "They Can't Beat My Big Boy!" Collier's, June 18, 1927, 45.
 - 82. Ibid., 47.

- 83. Ibid.
- 84. For Balzac, see Kate Sargent, "Chicago, Hands Up!" *The Forum* 78 (Oct. 1927): 522; for the great hypnotist, see Kate Sargent, "Chicago, Hands Down," *The Forum* 78 (Nov. 1927): 712.
 - 85. Sargent, "Hands Down," 712. The movie analogy is mine.
- 86. Victor S. Yarros, "Presenting Big Bill Thompson of Chicago," *The Independent* 119 (Nov. 5, 1927): 446; John B. Stone, "Big Bill Thompson," *Plain Talk* 2 (Jan. 1928): 43–50.
- 87. Elmer Davis, "Portrait of an Elected Person," *Harper's Monthly*, July 1927, 171; Nels Anderson, "Democracy in Chicago," *Century Magazine*, Nov. 1927, 76. Anderson attended the University of Chicago for his master's degree and received his doctorate at New York University under Harvey Zorbaugh.
 - 88. "Why Chicago Did It," New Republic, Apr. 20, 1927, 234-35.
- 89. William J. Flynn, "Thompson the Cowboy Rides In," *The Nation* 124 (Apr. 20, 1927): 421.
 - 90. "Chicago Bullets," The Nation 127 (July 25, 1928): 82-84.
- 91. Mississippi Valley Historical Review 14 (June 1927): 125 and 14 (Mar. 1928): 576. Surprisingly, the Chicago Tribune proved more sympathetic: "He [Thompson] manages to obscure or destroy the half-truths which are hidden in his bag of tricks, but the people who support him have a clear idea of the change they would like to make in the accepted theories of the country. They [ethnic groups] would like a better recognized part in its past as a sign that they are to share equally in the future." Editorial, Nov. 13, 1927.
- 92. For his travels, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 28, 1928; *Don't Scatter*; for the airport and fair, see *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 13, 1927, Dec. 14, 1927.
- 93. William Hale Thompson, "Shall We Shatter the Nation's Idols in School Histories?" Current History 27 (Feb. 1928); for the Watson reprinting, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 25, 1928; for the Coolidge lunch, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Feb. 25, 1928.
 - 94. Gosnell, Negro Politicians, 79.
 - 95. Ibid.
- 96. For Small's labor record, see Illinois State Federation of Labor, Weekly News Letter, Mar. 10, 1928, Victor Olander Papers, Special Collections, University of Illinois at Chicago; for the murder statistics, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, Illinois Crime Survey (Chicago: Illinois Association for Criminal Justice in cooperation with the Chicago Crime Commission, 1929), 677; for McSwiggan, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, 828–43; for Faherty and Darrow, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 7, 1924.
- 97. For the bombings, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 26, 1928, Jan. 29, 1928, Jan. 30, 1928; for the Esposito shooting, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 22, 1928; for the Deneen-Swanson bombings, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 27, 1928, Mar. 28, 1928; Norris quoted in *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Mar. 28, 1928; for the Granady murder, see *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 11, 1928.

98. Voting pattern based on figures in Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1928, 762, and Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1929, 725, 733; for the bond issue, see Stuart, Incredible Years, 360–61. The Emmerson-Small vote breakdown was Chicago, 409,939 to 155,167; Cook County, 509,468 to 283,595; and downstate 542,088 to 328,168. Swanson defeated Crowe in the city 373,949 to 236,063 and countywide by a vote of 466,598 to 265,371. The ticket was not helped by the presence of Frank Smith, attempting to win back his Senate seat. Smith lost to Otis Glenn. 99. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 11, 1928.

100. For the DePriest slating, see Gosnell, Negro Politicians, 80-81; for the meter measure and Riverview, see Chicago Tribune, May 15, 1928. Since Thompson controlled the committeemen selecting the candidate, he in effect slated DePriest.

Dawson was too young and independent for white Republicans to slate ahead of DePriest. Later, as a Democratic congressman, Dawson became one of the most powerful figures in the party organization.

101. For flood control and the convention, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1928, June 16, 1928; for the court ruling, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 311.

8

Victors' History: Capone, Thompson, Depression

[Red Kelly predicted:] In the primaries, it's going to be Thompson and Cermak, and this spring will be a Democratic one. Cermak and the whole ticket will get in. Thompson is dead politically, and he deserves it.

-James T. Farrell, Judgment Day

A THIRD TERM for Thompson promised even more of Chicago as civic metaphor. Since there was no avoiding it, the *Tribune* tried to find some consolation in an otherwise thankless role. "It may be for the best," an editorial reasoned. "A Chicagoan soon will be regarded as a person who is alive because of particular individual hardihood, courage and marksmanship. He will be known as the hard-boiled egg of the world. He has survived. That is sufficient." Others would know not to judge a Chicagoan by appearance. "The man probably can shoot from six pockets at once and will if annoyed."

Yet appearance, or image, was everything. Critics placed the Prairie School in Oak Park and Dreiser in New York; Chicago was that combination of the Union Stock Yards and crime. By 1928, the city's civic elite no longer bothered to complain; they were obsessed with using Chicago crime to smear organized labor, explain social pathologies, and sell newspapers. No one, though, could explain the exact nature of the relationship between Big Bill Thompson and Al Capone or between Thompson and municipal bankruptcy. But like the weather, everybody had an opinion, and virtually each one became part of the Thompson legend.

Thomas Donnelley contributed to the legend with an address to a dinner group at the Hotel La Salle in January 1928. Donnelley spoke on a subject of special interest to the audience: "The racketeer is a man who poses as a member of the labor union. Most of them are not connected with legitimate unions. They are thugs and murderers who attempt to organize, not the working men and themselves, but the employers into organizations by force, and from these organizations levy tribute." The racketeer threatened small businesses and "some of the larger industries" in the city. For a nation "founded on the Anglo-Saxon theory of government," Donnelley believed that the threat of crime had to be met or "it will be a disgrace to the race."²

Donnelley put himself in the hypothetical role of a public servant, overwhelmed by the constant appeal for favors; in that situation, corruption was inevitable. "But if, on the other hand, I was constantly being backed up by men representing the average citizen—and who could rally this citizenship to my support—I could stand firm in doing my duty without misgivings." Donnelley was anything but average in social standing and wealth, yet his examples of racketeering verged on the pedestrian. Delicatessens, fish markets, and laundries—the open-shop movement took what "evidence" it could find.³

The pretext of the dinner meeting had been to discuss Chicago's crime; the intent was to further the agenda of the Employers' Association. Established in 1903, the organization endorsed five purposes, among them "the right of freedom of contract" and protection of "the public right in the free and uninterrupted use of the streets and in the transportation of persons or goods." Among the unsympathetic, those goals translated into the open shop and use of court injunctions in labor disputes. Such ideas would have appealed to the Thompson of 1915, not 1928.

Donnelley proved more consistent. He was president of R. R. Donnelley and Sons, a major Chicago printing company and open shop; he also served as chairman of the executive committee for the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award and as a member of the advisory council of the Employers' Association. Both positions befit a man hostile to organized labor.⁵

In 1929 the association released *It's a Racket!* an exposé of the local labor situation. Coauthors Thomas Quinn Beesley and Gordon L. Hostetter ostensibly dedicated their book to William Howard Taft's Forgotten Man, the public. A more honest dedication might have used the comment Chief Justice Taft made in 1922: "The only class which is distinctly arrayed against the court is a class that does not like the courts at any rate, and

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that is organized labor. That faction we have to hit every little while, because they are continually violating the law and depending on threats and violence to accomplish their purpose." The book itself portrayed a Chicago under siege; allegedly, no fewer than 107 rackets (including domestic servants) operated under the control of men responsible for 157 bombings.⁶

The gangster by Hostetter and Beesley's definition constituted a racketeer, and one or the other intended to control Chicago's cleaning and laundry industry. "Your First Impulse Is To Laugh But—" headed a photograph in an Employers' Association pamphlet and *It's a Racket!* The picture showed a pair of men's pants with the crotch burnt out from chemicals, a purported example of racketeer sabotage. But the laundry and cleaning business, Hostetter and Beesley reported, had freed itself of racketeer rule. The "victory," however, raised questions the Employers' Association never addressed.

In 1928 Capone grossed \$105 million, primarily from alcohol, gambling, and prostitution. The work was as difficult as it was profitable, and Capone succeeded only after a bloody process of trial and error. Why would he, his subordinates, or competitors trouble themselves over ash and manure hauling, sausage manufacture, or any of the other activities the association listed as racketeer-dominated? The obvious answer was profit; in 1929 the association estimated the rackets cost Chicago \$136 million.

Business owners supposedly faced a choice of racketeer "protection" or violence. Hostetter and Beesley told the story of Morris Becker, an independent cleaner who went to the extreme of seeking out Capone for a business partnership in 1928. Becker said he had no choice given the law's inability to stop racketeering. "I now have no need of the state's attorney, the police department or the Employers' Association," he announced after incorporating with Capone. "I have the best protection in the world."

But Capone did not necessarily make an interested business partner. Six years later Becker admitted in court that the agreement never moved beyond the preliminary incorporation papers. In fact, by November 1930 Capone claimed he was ready to deal himself out of racketeering altogether. He suggested a trade to Criminal Court Judge John P. McGoorty—an end to racketeering in exchange for carte blanche in liquor trafficking. Capone could just as easily have offered the legendary Casey of Mudville to the Yankees for Babe Ruth. Either way, the other side would have been left with little if anything of substance.⁹

Pretense served Capone as it did those who defined racketeering as a mix of organized crime and labor. The St. Valentine's Day Massacre was the

most notorious instance of gang violence in 1920s Chicago. Hostetter and Beesley described the victims as "seven racketeers who operated business and alcohol rackets [and who] received death as a valentine from their hoodlum rivals." In other words, the victims were not merely gangsters but racketeers as well.¹⁰

The *Tribune* offered another take on racketeering with a unique (and long-discarded) scenario—"Killings Laid to Union War." According to the *Tribune*, two vice presidents of the laundry and dyehouse chauffeurs' local allegedly threatened their president, Oscar Nelson. According to an unnamed source in the state's attorney's office (whose new occupant, John Swanson, had also received an offer of stock in Sears-Roebuck from Julius Rosenwald), the two had links with Bugs Moran and wanted control of the union treasury. Readers were left to infer that the vice president of the Chicago Federation of Labor and Thompson floor leader in the city council then contacted Capone to discuss an appropriate response.¹¹

The CFL suggested another definition of racketeering. "Everything is a racket inasmuch as the workers are concerned," observed CFL executive board member Charles F. Wills. "However, anything the employers may start, no matter how questionable, is a legitimate enterprise. What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." John D. Rockefeller no doubt would have understood. Associations, cartels, and pools were part of what industrialists exercised as their rights, along with the use of strikebreakers. American business during the Gilded Age and later embraced many activities, not the least of which was a form of racketeering.¹²

Labor relations in the half-century before the Wagner Act were notable for a bloody lack of civility. During that era management was forever seeking ways to describe organized labor; the resulting anti-union rhetoric operated under its own rules of fashion. One generation's "anarchist" became another's "bolshevik." Had they been active into the late 1920s, Albert Parsons of Haymarket Square and the socialist Eugene Debs would have qualified as "racketeers." The names changed, the purpose behind them did not.

Austin H. McCormick, New York City's commissioner of corrections, observed in 1935 that racketeering "is considered typical of the 20th century but is actually as old as civilization." As to the modern variety, cut-throat competition and failure were just as real beneath the awning of a butcher shop as in a corporate boardroom. A brick tossed through a competitor's window or at his head, a fire behind his store—gangsters were not necessary for that facet of business relations.¹³

Chicago in the 1920s was a city literally on the move as ethnic groups

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established middle-class neighborhoods. Newly arrived residents may have disliked older merchants who were left over from a different time—and language. Or a brand-new business strip may have been entirely Polish, Italian, or Jewish, with one store too many. The decade advertised a prosperity close at hand. When it did not arrive soon enough for some business owners, they may have felt the urge to pick up gasoline and matches or make a phone call to someone who would. Those were possibilities that did not interest the Employers' Association.

While crime may have been big business in the 1920s, the Employers' Association had no monopoly reporting on it; other groups, such as the Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, wanted their say. The association began in 1926 with a membership that Thompson would campaign against the following year. Of the group's seventy-seven directors, at least ten were members of the Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award; Sewell Avery, James Patten, and Julius Rosenwald fought for criminal justice as they had the open shop. The actual work was done by professionals and published in 1929 as *The Illinois Crime Survey*. 14

The Survey combined structural with social reform proposals. The courts were to be streamlined, the police professionalized, juvenile delinquency programs better funded. The chapter on the Chicago police force was written by August Vollmer, police chief in Berkeley, California. According to the Survey, Vollmer's "enlightened and scientific methods of police administration in his own city and his work in reorganizing the police departments of the cities of Los Angeles and Detroit and of Havana, Cuba, as well as his writings and addresses" qualified him as an exceptional critic. Vollmer found that inadequate training and "corrupt political influence" severely weakened the Chicago police. As remedies he urged divorcing politics from police work and creating a strong esprit de corps: "Training in morale should begin in recruiting school and continue throughout the officer's career as a member of the department." 15

Vollmer did not treat morale in its fuller context. Working conditions and salary affected officer performance as much as new uniforms or enforcement of the civil service code. Thompson understood this without visits to Berkeley or Havana. His method of running the department—a gradual extension of benefits coupled with politicized hiring and promotion practices—would endure another thirty years, until a police scandal forced Richard J. Daley to bring in the Berkeley criminologist Orlando W. Wilson as chief of police.

Clifford R. Shaw and Earl D. Myers's chapter on juvenile delinquency showed a greater familiarity with local conditions. Shaw was affiliated with

the Institute for Juvenile Research while Myers taught at the University of Chicago. Their research differed fundamentally from earlier efforts. The old settlement house interest in delinquency remained, as did the call for better housing and the end to child labor. However, the motivation had changed entirely. The social gospel was dead. Shaw and Myers advocated a higher standard of living "for the health and social efficiency of the different members of the family." ¹⁶

The various recommendations were intended to combat delinquency where it "tends to concentrate in areas of deterioration." The proposals had to wait for the coming of the New Deal, when national government finally showed an interest in social welfare. Then problem neighborhoods like Back of the Yards and South Chicago received help, although not the old-fashioned kind. The settlement house pioneer Graham Taylor believed, "The motive of our whole movement is in being 'with,' not merely 'for,' others." In the new scheme, Washington adopted the attitude of the Chicago School of sociology—study the less fortunate at a safe emotional distance and never fully embrace them, excepting those weeks before Congressional and presidential elections.¹⁷

John Landesco wrote the *Survey*'s most famous section, "Organized Crime in Chicago." Landesco had emigrated from Romania at the age of five, and, like William Dever, seemed intent on escaping the specter of ethnic stereotypes. He treated gangsters with a professional detachment learned at the University of Chicago, where he received his bachelor's degree in sociology and did graduate work. "Politics in the river wards and among common people elsewhere as well is a feudal relationship," Landesco wrote in the *Survey*. "The feudal system was based not on law but on personal loyalties. Politics tends, therefore, to become a *feudal system*." Gangs operated the same way, with personal loyalties binding both politician and criminal. Landesco held Thompson responsible for the system's spread. Organized crime controlled prostitution and gambling because Thompson tolerated the wide-open town, and, ultimately, the gangster controlled the politician: "In circles close to Capone, it was well-known that he contributed substantially to the Thompson campaign [of 1927]." 18

Landesco accepted allegation as truth. So did the Employers' Association, which provided information for the section on racketeering. While he presented the "facts" as compiled by the association, Landesco may have had doubts about their authenticity. In an introductory footnote, he admitted that John Fitzpatrick, Victor Olander, and other labor leaders objected to the accuracy of some of the material: "Three conferences took place in Mr. Olander's office on the points in question. The exchange of

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views was advantageous and certain modifications of the text were considered, but no final decision was reached." Racketeering again appeared as business, not labor, defined it.¹⁹

At 1,100 pages the *Survey* did not capture popular interest. That task fell to Frank J. Loesch, elected president of the Chicago Crime Commission in February 1928. A survivor of the Chicago Fire, Loesch came from warrior stock—a grandfather served with Napoleon, his father with the Grand Duke of Baden. There was something invigorating, at least for the press, about a seventy-six-year-old man taking over the Crime Commission on the eve of Chicago's violent 1928 primary. Previously apolitical, the commission under Loesch quickly moved to support John Swanson over Robert Crowe for state's attorney. Loesch later was appointed a special assistant state attorney general to investigate vote fraud in the primary.²⁰

Loesch contributed two stories to the Thompson legend. He charged during the 1931 mayoral primary that Capone had given \$260,000 to Thompson's 1927 campaign; the proof rested solely on the accuser's reputation. Loesch also described an incident from the fall 1928 elections. Driven by a professed desire to avoid further violence, Loesch met with Capone at the gangster's headquarters in the Hotel Lexington. On the office wall of Chicago's most famous gangster hung portraits of his three heroes—Lincoln, Washington, and Big Bill Thompson.²¹

Capone indeed enjoyed cultivating his public image. He allowed photographs and entertained reporters with quotable observations, such as his comment on Prohibition: "I'm a public benefactor. . . . You can't cure thirst by law." In September 1931, he attended a Cub-Sox charity ballgame at Comiskey Park, where he and his son were photographed with Cub star Gabby Hartnett. Proceeds from the game went to help the unemployed, as did Capone's soup kitchen. During one six-week period, it prepared 120,000 meals for hungry Chicagoans. But somehow the idea of posing as the businessman at his desk, a man patriotic down to the pictures on the wall, never occurred to him. Capone may have wanted to keep his headquarters a secret (although its location was common knowledge), or reporters in the era of *The Front Page* may not have been enterprising enough to get a photograph. There also was a third possibility, that the scene Loesch described existed solely in his imagination.²²

The contribution charge was more serious. If true, it raises questions about why Herbert Hoover restricted income-tax prosecution to Capone. Extending it to Thompson would have offered two advantages. Such action could have silenced a long-time critic and simultaneously enhanced

Hoover's reputation for nonpartisanship. Prosecution of Thompson in Chicago would have shown Hoover capable of doing to a Republican as Franklin Roosevelt did to Tammany Hall and Jimmy Walker. However, nothing in the Justice Department files on Thompson or Capone indicates the federal government had proof or even knowledge of Loesch's allegations.²³

The FBI did know about Loesch, who hoped to cultivate the friendship of director J. Edgar Hoover. "Your department is doing splendid work," Loesch wrote Hoover in September 1934, "but the weakness of the situation [the war on organized crime] is the incompetence, the corruption and the political control of most of our local police throughout the United States." Loesch flattered to gain leverage with the director: "Please extend to him [a crime commission member whose name is censored in the Freedom of Information Act document] the courtesies you have always granted me and be assured you may trust his discretion to the utmost." In essence Loesch and the commission saw Hoover as one of their own. "I hope that Santa Claus brought you a big bag of the things you wished [for]," a member wrote after Christmas 1934, "and that your New Year may be most prosperous." Probably no one in Chicago expected holiday greetings to become part of an FBI file on the commission.²⁴

Loesch's conception of civic virtue excluded Thompson and gangsters; it also had little place for organized labor. In March 1932, Loesch contacted Senator William Borah on the nomination of Judge James H. Wilkerson to the federal Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals; Wilkerson had presided over Capone's trial for income tax evasion. Despite growing opposition, Loesch pressed the nomination with Borah, who chaired the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee. The rationale could have come directly from the Employers' Association. Loesch cited an investigation by the state's attorney "that fully two-thirds of all unions in Chicago are controlled by or pay tribute directly or indirectly to Al Capone's terroristic organizations." Loesch betrayed an open-shop sympathy for workers: "It can be said with truth that ninetenths of the members of the unions are honest, law-abiding citizens who pay little attention to union affairs because it is not wise for their personal safety to take too great an interest in them." From that perspective the weak had to be protected against exploitation, which Loesch did not distinguish from trade unionism.25

Loesch went on to outline a conspiracy—organized crime had overwhelmed numerous unions and now threatened both political parties in Chicago. He lacked documentation—again—and so resorted to the Old Testament: "It is the hand of Esau but the voice of Jacob." While organized labor detested Wilkerson as an "injunction judge," Loesch saw him as a weapon against Capone. "I am not suggesting that there may not be union men honestly opposing Judge Wilkerson's confirmation," he wrote, "but I give it as my conviction that no matter what ground may be taken to defeat confirmation such fact will be claimed by the criminal organizations as a victory for them and for Capone" and would hurt all law enforcement attempts "seeking to curb the criminal career of Al Capone." ²⁶

The argument made a fascinating exercise in (il)logic: Wilkerson had to be confirmed or else Capone, already imprisoned, would grow stronger. Loesch's plea had little effect on the nomination. In 1922 Wilkerson had granted a broad injunction against railway workers in response to Attorney General Harry Daugherty's fears of a Communist conspiracy; a decade later, complicity in red-baiting no longer enhanced a judge's reputation. Wilkerson was forced to ask Hoover to withdraw his nomination.²⁷

In 1929 Loesch was appointed to the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, known as the Wickersham Commission. Chicago's crime images were to reappear yet again. With the help of Professor E. W. Burgess of the University of Chicago, the commission published its first volume, *Report on the Causes of Crime*. Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay of the Institute for Juvenile Research coauthored the second volume, *Social Factors in Juvenile Delinquency*. Chicago provided a wealth of source material and a constant reference for the political factors in crime: Chicago police did not catch all the robbers and burglars, the department was demoralized, politics played too great a role in the courts. These were the "lessons" from Chicago (drawn from the crime survey done by the Illinois Association for Criminal Justice), along with the appropriate quote from Charles Merriam: "Those familiar with the politics of our cities are well aware of these conditions." 28

There were other lessons—police professionalism at some point reflected fringe benefits, court reform smacked of WASP elitism in its call for nonpartisanship, and Merriam the urban critic lacked objectivity. The commission and related studies avoided the obvious, that in the 1920s Chicago worked well enough for millions. Blacks left behind the vestiges of Southern peonage as ethnic groups prepared to control political institutions and challenge WASP domination of business. That kind of observation, however, was dangerous. It transformed "areas of delinquency" into places entirely different, and it suggested Thompson served an important function as a symbol of political discontent.

Merriam spoke for reformers unwilling to cede those points. He wrote in Recent Social Trends in the United States on the need to rid "government of coarse graft, crude incompetence and distressing disorganization." Urban reform would come when communities adopted a model based on the "government of cities like Cincinnati and Milwaukee and of states like New York and Wisconsin among others," where the expert was not beholden to the politician. Merriam the candidate had tried to bring that vision to city hall, and he would try again as a New Dealer in Washington. But the ideal was flawed by its author's long-festering sense of public rejection.²⁹

As for organized crime, reality was far simpler than researchers believed—gangsters murdered one another just as politicians befriended criminals. What the various reports and surveys overlooked was that, in Chicago, it always had been that way. If Capone in any way tried to control local politics in the 1920s, he was not the first criminal to do so; during the 1880s, the gambler Michael Cassius McDonald exerted a sizable influence over local Democrats. "He never held office," an observer wrote, "but he ruled the city with an iron hand." Characters such as McDonald, John Coughlin, and Michael Kenna thrived as politician-criminals because they did not offend the personal liberty sentiments of the Carter Harrisons, I and II.³⁰

With "muscle" defined by brass knuckles and blackjacks, public outrage over crime or polling-place incidents usually did not last long. During elections, vice made a good issue; otherwise, it was tolerated and the activities segregated. The situation was forever changed in 1914, when moral reformers finally pressured the younger Harrison to close down the Levee District. Necessity then gave Chicago criminals a head start in matters of organization; by the start of Prohibition, they already were comfortable with such conveniences as the telephone and the automobile. Bets or gambling information could be called in from anywhere, and the car allowed vice to go suburban.³¹

Carter Harrison II benefited through early retirement. His underworld connections were the aldermen of the First Ward, Coughlin and Kenna. That the mayor of Chicago depended on two de facto pimps for help in the city council has not hurt his reputation; more than eighty years after leaving office, he is still considered a reformer. Ironically, Thompson found that too much success ruined a reputation. At two terms, he would have been known as the antiwar or public works mayor. But he won a third term and revived the notion of personal liberty. Only the machine guns would not keep quiet.³²

Chicago was, beyond doubt, violent in the 1920s: At about half the size, the city generated the same number of murders as New York. There were

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283 in 1926 and 296 in 1927 to New York's 289 murders and manslaughters in 1926 and 278 in 1927. At least part of the difference may have been a product of demographics and local economies. Like New York, Chicago had a population that included African Americans, Germans, Irish, Italians, and Jews, but this was only a partial listing. Chicago in 1920 was home to twenty-nine identifiable immigrant groups speaking everything from Flemish to Magyar.³³

A diverse population at some point engendered a sense of isolation and antagonism. Group friction did not necessarily end with the 1919 riot, nor did veterans forget army training from 1917–18 that taught them how to kill. The kind of work in each city may have been yet another cause. Chicago factories and stockyards possibly left workers feeling murderous in a way that Brooklyn warehouses and wharves did not.

Whatever the explanation for the disparity between cities, the number of gang murders in Chicago did not equal the publicity given them. The 82 for 1926–27 combined were likely to make news, but death came in various forms. For example, an average of 703 people a year died in Chicago auto accidents between 1922 and 1931. Like the streets, work also could be dangerous for reasons unrelated to Capone. From July 1929 through June 1930, industrial accidents in the city claimed 301 lives. But not all deaths mattered equally to the press or the Employers' Association. As to gang violence, Gilbert Keith Chesterton for one did not feel threatened when he visited. "Chicago has many beauties," Chesterton noted, "including the fastidiousness and good taste to assassinate nobody except assassins." 34

Because Prohibition rendered organized crime a big business, criminals possessed the qualification politics always demanded of its players—money. When the gangster Jack Zuta was murdered in August 1930, police found he held membership number 772 in the William Hale Thompson Republican Club; also recovered was a canceled check to the club for \$500. Yet if Zuta provided indisputable "proof" of Thompson's link to crime, both the reform state's attorney and the federal government did little to exploit it.³⁵

For Capone, the difference between Thompson and Dever was one of degree, not kind. Organized crime would have continued regardless of the occupant of city hall. Thompson made it easier, but not because he was on the take. Rather, his instincts told him the public would not obey Prohibition. So, he ignored it and thereby hoped to benefit. While he may have accepted the money and even the votes of gangsters, Thompson did not predicate his actions on their support. As ever, he looked to satisfy the greatest number of voters at any particular time.

The relationship between criminals and the outside world was so common that it extended to Tribune Tower. Reporter Jake Lingle was gunned down gangland style that June. Possibly killed on orders from Capone, Lingle quickly lost martyr status when his criminal connections were disclosed: The enterprising reporter had found a way to augment his salary from \$65 a week to \$60,000 a year. In defense the *Tribune* charged that employees at the *Daily News* and the *American* also fraternized with gangsters. Crime—which seemed so easy to understand when Thompson was held responsible—began to confuse even the press.³⁶

The political influence of gangs endured well past the age of Capone and Thompson. Mayor Ed Kelly tolerated gambling in the 1930s and 1940s because the payoffs helped sustain Democratic ward organizations. Kelly also tolerated organized crime's control of First Ward politics. For all his supposed power, Richard J. Daley did the same. Daley himself had come from a social athletic club, a step up from the neighborhood gang and often an apprenticeship to the ward organization. Public leaders raised in this environment accepted the political presence of criminal interests as an inevitable part of city life. Zero tolerance was left to federal prosecutors.

Black street gangs found politics in the 1960s. Gang leader Jeff Fort and his Blackstone Rangers gladly took War on Poverty funding to help operate a job-training program; while they were not transformed into members of the middle class, two members did attend inaugural festivities for Richard Nixon in Washington. After the Rangers evolved into the El Rukns, they were recruited to help Mayor Jane Byrne's 1983 reelection campaign.

Street gangs in the 1990s were actively promoting themselves as part of the answer to urban decline. The administration of Richard M. Daley believed them, to the extent the city's transit agency awarded a job-referral contract in July 1994 to 21st Century VOTE; the organization was a political action group with a sizable presence of current and former gang members. Public outcry quickly forced Daley to drop the contract.³⁷

Several weeks later, Joseph Gardner attempted to revive the Harold Washington movement by announcing he would challenge Daley for the 1995 mayoral nomination. During his press conference, Gardner touched on the question of gangs in politics. He cast them more in the image of Richard J. Daley than Jeff Fort: "I don't separate people on the basis of gang membership or non-gang membership as long as members and leadership are engaged in positive things." Gardner then criticized the tendency to label people. "Not every criminal is a gang member," he said, "just as not every person affiliated with a gang has committed a crime." Jack Zuta may have suffered the misfortune of being born too soon.³⁸

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Two months after Jake Lingle's murder, the Saturday Evening Post told of a breakthrough in Chicago's war on crime. "Business leaders, not politicians, not preachers, not reformers, have taken on the Augean job of giving Chicago a thorough housecleaning," Robert Isham Randolph wrote in the magazine. President of the Chicago Association of Commerce, Randolph explained, "Their determined, organized long-time program of local crimefighting is radically different from the ordinary political reform movement. It is utterly nonpolitical in its background." Randolph's heroes were not covering up crime or using it as a political issue "to secure acclaim and ballot box support." 39

Randolph believed that the Secret Six, a select group of Chicago Association of Commerce members organized in February 1930, was making a difference. As the name implied, the group worked in secrecy. "Of course, any intelligent person will realize that I cannot reveal all that is to be told about the operation of the Secret Six," Randolph wrote, "[because] to do so would be highly destructive to this unique group of public-spirited men." He did relate Secret Six cooperation with State's Attorney John Swanson, its use of undercover agents, and its disdain for publicity: "Getting credit for what we do is the least of our worries. We are not running for office or holding official jobs." 40

The group's activities remain largely a secret, today as in 1930, though not the identities of members. Robert Isham Randolph, Edward E. Gore, and George A. Paddock were joined by Frank Loesch, Julius Rosenwald, and Samuel Insull, who, according to a 1993 study, was "the main financial backer of the Secret Six." If true, Insull would seem to have been working against himself. He financed a group whose success would come at the expense of his ally in city hall. Another possibility is that by 1930 Insull and Thompson were no longer close. The agenda of a utilities magnate did not always need to coincide with an urban demagogue's, and vice versa. The thought probably was too much for Charles Merriam and other reformers to bear.⁴¹

The Justice Department tracked a highly publicized break between the Secret Six and Swanson in 1932. However, the FBI continues to censor material on the group. One extant comment, though, indicates the real interests of the Secret Six. An agent in the Chicago office of the FBI reported to J. Edgar Hoover, "The Employers' Association is a separate and distinct entity from the investigative unit [of the Secret Six] . . . although in effect the real directors of one are identical with those of the other." 42

Two members of the Secret Six, Gore and Paddock, belonged to the Sons of the American Revolution. Frank Loesch, the son of German immigrants,

told an audience at Princeton University in March 1930, "The American people are not a lawless people. It's the foreigners and the first generation of Americans who are loaded on us." George Q. Johnson, the federal attorney who prosecuted Capone on income tax charges, and Eliot Ness, who battled Capone across the pages of *The Untouchables* if not the streets of Chicago, were both Scandinavian. Prohibition had provoked a cultural war in Chicago as it had in other communities nationwide.⁴³

Old Immigrants won only the battle involving Capone. In the 1930s they lost Prohibition and a long-held sense of superiority over New Immigrants. The Employers' Association also found itself defeated. The association suffered the same problem as Dr. Frankenstein—the monster proved easier to create than control. Frederick Lewis Allen used *It's a Racket!* as a source for *Only Yesterday*; John Gunther, not yet famous for his travelogues, wrote "The High Cost of Hoodlums" in *Harper's*. Employers' Association figures on racketeering were treated as authoritative.⁴⁴

But *It's a Racket!* failed to convince outsiders entirely. "Much has been said and written about Chicago as the capital city of crime," Hostetter and Beesley wrote. "This is an unfair and, so far as the facts go, an untrue appraisement." In *Only Yesterday* Allen concluded otherwise: "The city of Chicago [in the 1920s] was giving the whole country, and indeed the whole world, an object lesson in violent and unpunished crime." Allen's assessment was only as accurate as his Chicago sources.⁴⁵

While crime did not necessarily terrorize Chicago as the Employers' Association argued, the emerging Depression did. The horror lay in its inevitability: No matter how bad the month just endured, the next promised to be worse. With the Stock Market Crash barely two months old, some 880 Chicago families received assistance; a year later, the figure had risen to over 51,000. By October 1932, unemployment in the city stood at 750,000, or nearly half the working population. The ideas of overproduction, underconsumption, and bad monetary policy were of little comfort to those without jobs or shelter.⁴⁶

In 1920 Thompson reduced economic complexities to help derail Frank Lowden's presidential bid; wartime inflation became the responsibility of a political opponent. Ten years later, the situation was reversed—Thompson and the Republican party were held accountable for conditions. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon offered a New Year's message full of hope for 1930. Mellon found nothing "in the present situation that is either menacing or warrants pessimism," but Chicagoans knew better. City government was breaking down.⁴⁷

There was little money on hand for city services or relief efforts because

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of a long-standing tax problem. Real estate taxes accounted for 85 percent of Chicago's tax burden in the 1920s. According to law, a county board of assessors issued tax bills (based on valuations done every four years) and published its findings in the press; appeals were made to a board of review. Reality differed considerably. Both parties in Cook County learned that manipulation of the two boards made good politics. Tax assessments went unpublished so politicians could go to their constituents—corporate or residential—and promise to "fix" the tax bill. Politicized assessments led to city tax bills that deviated on an average of 40 percent in 1923.⁴⁸

The drive for home ownership among New Immigrant groups exacerbated the problem. For Poles and Bohemians particularly, real estate carried overriding importance. According to a Polish proverb, "a man without land is like a man without legs. He crawls about a lot but gets nowhere." Both ethnic groups dominated the city's building and loan industry, which provided the bulk of home mortgage funds. For people who may have despised the tax collector in the old country, an offer of help with the tax bill meant more money for the house.⁴⁹

In late 1926 the Cook County Board of Review established the Joint Commission on Real Estate Valuation. The move was intended to portray Cook County Board president Anton Cermak as more than just another ethnic politician; Cermak hoped the advisory board would broaden his political base by casting him as a politician who honestly confronted municipal problems. The press popularized the fairness issue by running photographs of neighboring homes exactly alike in every detail but their tax bills. With the public finally aware that the traditional tax fix did not help everyone equally, the state tax commission ordered a new reassessment in May 1928. Those findings were not available until after the Crash. 50

Politicized taxation was coupled with a questionable revenue collection shortcut. The National Industrial Conference Board reported in 1927 that "In Illinois excessive local use of the treasury or tax anticipation warrant has created a distinctive fiscal problem." Warrants allowed local governments to spend the next year's tax revenue. As late as 1914 the Chicago board of education operated without use of tax warrants; twelve years later, after both Republican and Democratic control, it had \$31.2 million in warrants outstanding. Warrants allowed the schools to function in the shortrun and finance new construction, textbooks, and increased teacher pensions. The danger lay in overdependence. "The anticipatory warrant appears to possess some of the qualities of a habit-forming drug," the National Industrial Conference Board warned.⁵¹

The combination of tax reform and a worsening Depression deprived the school board of its cash fix. The schools could not float warrants until tax reassessment was complete, and homeowners were little inclined to forward tax payments. By February 1930, the board (along with the city and county) missed payrolls because of the lack of tax revenue. And yet Thompson, not Cermak or the underlying conditions, was blamed for the dilemma. Magazine articles noted only those problems in the city proper while newspapers ran cartoons of a profligate Thompson. Voters assumed that overall conditions would improve with a new mayor.

They did, gradually and for reasons that had little to do with better municipal finances. Local government recovered even more slowly. In 1938, with Thompson seven years retired, delinquent real estate taxes totaled as much as \$146 million. In the mid-1980s, when Thompson had long since been reduced to caricature, the same tax system was producing the same results, and the press again ran side-by-side pictures of houses with fluctuating assessments.⁵²

At first, no one thought Chicago would be affected, financially or otherwise, by Thompson's absence from city hall. His style of government had always been simple verging on primitive. Thompson picked his department heads and, for better or worse, let them administer. The same detachment ruled his relations with the city council. Thompson had long ago given up trying to dominate it; he had neither the patience nor the resources to subdue the various factions. Budget-making was akin to an annual trip to the dentist, unpleasant and at times painful.

He always found it easier to pressure the council through direct appeals to the public. This worked with issues such as water meters and, more importantly, the Burnham Plan. Aldermen could ill-afford to deny a Thompson request for bonds. If anything constituted treason—as well as political suicide—in Chicago, it was a politician opposed to progress in the form of public works.

But that was in the past. When they rejected the bond measures in the spring of 1928, voters were signaling they wanted something more from Thompson, only he was too ill from his nervous breakdown to give it. Aldermen, who had been united only in their general dislike of the mayor, also failed. There were simply too many factions for the council to assume the role of chief executive.

Thompson began making public appearances after an absence of three months while day-to-day control of city hall fell to Corporation Counsel Samuel Ettleson. The arrangement worked well enough until the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, in February 1929. People expected their mayor to

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respond during a public crisis. Thompson had done so after the *Eastland* disaster and, to a lesser extent, the race riot. This time, however, he did not even try to divert public attention with a plan or a promise.⁵³

Under the best of circumstances, Thompson could not have done much in the wake of the Crash; the modern social welfare safety net was still several years in the making. Anyway, Chicagoans were accustomed to suffering the consequences of any fall; what they needed was the reassurance that at some point they would find the strength to get up. James Curley and Fiorello La Guardia, each in his own way, offered that hope: Curley promising work and wages, La Guardia making sure the circus came to Brooklyn. Cities were sustained by gestures as simple. In contrast, Thompson seemed as defeated and confused as the next person.⁵⁴

Thompson mostly rested, at home or in places like Wisconsin and Nantucket. He recovered slowly, refusing to consider talk of resignation. Finally, in mid-1930, he was ready. The instincts of the political mercenary now dictated that he save himself if not his city. So Thompson announced he would not be a Republican in the 1930 Senate race. He was abandoning Ruth Hanna McCormick for Democrat J. Hamilton Lewis. 55

McCormick suffered two weaknesses Thompson sensed would prove fatal in Depression-era politics. She was a McCormick, the widow of Medill and sister-in-law of *Tribune* publisher Robert. The 1930s did not encourage deference to an earlier decade's elite. McCormick, apparently, did not foresee this. Thompson had supported her in the primary, if only because her opponent was Charles Deneen. She responded by saying she wanted the backing neither of Thompson nor his friends.⁵⁶

McCormick compounded her snub with the mistake of hanging onto Prohibition. She admitted, "I am legally dry, publicly dry, privately dry and personally dry." The candidate promised to adhere to public sentiment on the Eighteenth Amendment, though she did not seem to think it would differ from hers. Thompson was now free to attack.⁵⁷

He saw repeal as an issue that could maintain the allegiance of those voters he had won in 1927. "Prohibition is a failure and is responsible for 99 percent of organized crime," he argued in an anti-McCormick release. "It is also a prominent factor in the business collapse of the nation. It is largely responsible for the terrific increase in taxation, as well as throwing out of employment of two million men." There was no mention of the saloon closings in 1915 or the law enforcement commissioner seven years later. Those were part of a now-discarded political image. ⁵⁸

Thompson also circulated a pamphlet against McCormick in the city's black neighborhoods. In it he promised to "never betray the people of

Chicago by voting for any member of the McCormick or *Tribune* family for anything." The appeal for a white Democrat in the black community came too early, especially when that candidate was Lewis. His comment from the 1920 elections, that he would stop "criminal Negroes from lording it over Christian white men," did not encourage crossover votes. Congressman Oscar DePriest declared Thompson "a sick man" for his opposition to McCormick and added, "I don't propose to see him use our people as his cat's-paws." ⁵⁹

Thompson was not nearly as deranged as DePriest supposed. Lewis won by more than 470,000 votes in Cook County and with only 24 percent of the city's black vote; the Depression already was rendering the Republican party irrelevant to 1930s Chicago. Because the Democrats did not want or need him (when Thompson declared his support for Lewis to a group of Democrats, one replied, "Well, who cares?"), Thompson ultimately switched to the party of William Lemke. DePriest refused to change because he could not envision a Roosevelt differing from a Lewis. However, community standing did not protect him from political obsolescence. DePriest lost his House seat to Arthur W. Mitchell, a black Democrat, in 1934.⁶⁰

DePriest was one of the masses who could not understand the economic and political changes taking place. For all of its severity, the Depression was little understood in the Chicago of 1930–31. "We Need Depressions—They Mould Men and Nations," Alden B. Baxter wrote in *Chicago Commerce* magazine. Baxter noted that economists were trying to make "these downward swings of the pendulum a thing of the past. Perhaps they will succeed. But for myself, I cannot help but hope that no truly perfect system is ever discovered, for I believe that depressions are the making of men and of nations."

Thompson's last months in office were as relevant to the plight of Chicagoans as was Baxter's wisdom. As part of his attack against Ruth McCormick, he hired out the Apollo Theatre for a Halloween speech and rally. An appendicitis attack kept him from appearing, but only in the most literal sense. Commissioner of Public Works Richard W. Wolfe read the speech that biographer William Stuart claimed Thompson dictated from his sickbed before he allowed doctors to operate. It traced the *Tribune*'s involvement in the deaths of Abraham Lincoln, Carter Harrison I, and others. Citing "nine years' experience on a cow ranch and my ability with a gun," he promised "that I will not go alone" should anyone try to assassinate him. (If opposites did not attract, they began to resemble one another. The speech led Robert McCormick to buy a bullet-proof car and

employ bodyguards. Thompson feared reprisal enough to carry a sawed-off shotgun in his car and keep firearms in his hotel suite.)62

The hate-drenched rhetoric was unusual, even for Thompson. As the Depression worsened (and as long as no McCormicks were involved), he mostly preferred to entertain. "This slump is all psychological," he said in October 1930, and he had a promotion "to turn the tide the other way and make this town hum." The solution was the Chicago Prosperity Drive, which would, according to a flier, "double business, wipe out bread lines and create jobs for the unemployed." Chicagoans were to spend their money in participating stores, receive tickets at the rate of four for every dollar spent, and participate in the grand \$1 million drawing. Robert Isham Randolph of the Association of Commerce protested, as did school superintendent William Bogan, who would not allow teachers to publicize the lottery. By year's end, the scheme to "bring back good times" was dead.⁶³

Thompson did find one prominent adherent to his way of thinking: "The flivver was worn out on the summer vacation trip and there has to be a new car, as well as a Christmas present for Aunt Susie. People are beginning to spend their money." So spoke William Randolph Hearst, the official guest for Chicago Day, the annual commemoration of the Chicago Fire. A twenty-six-mile parade of five thousand cars through the city allowed Hearst to make the appropriate isolationist/patriotic remarks at Lincoln and Washington Parks (and to behold the William Hale Thompson Water Pumping Station on South Western Avenue). A crowd of fifty thousand later gathered at Soldier Field to hear Hearst's speech, in defense of his printing a secret Anglo-French naval treaty. But Hearst was wrong. New cars and presents could wait, and did.⁶⁴

Thompson was hoping the Depression might be amenable to parades—and Chicago voters to a fourth term. That October the Illinois Supreme Court finally ruled in his favor on the *Tribune*'s real estate experts suit; he was confident the same luck would hold through the 1931 primary and mayoral election. Party leaders—including Samuel Ettleson and George Harding—preferred either Municipal Judge John H. Lyle or Alderman Arthur F. Albert. Of the two, Lyle had a more attractive record based on his reputation for arresting gangsters on vagrancy warrants. In a general election that promised to be Democratic, no one else wanted to fight Thompson for the right to lose.⁶⁵

Lyle could not make much of an issue out of unemployment; Democrats then would do the same and blame the party in control of both city hall and the White House. So he attacked on crime. Lyle charged that Capone controlled city hall through City Sealer Daniel A. Serritella and had con-

tributed \$50,000 to Thompson in 1927 and another \$150,000 in the current primary. Frank Loesch thought the figures too modest and put the size of Capone's earlier contribution at \$260,000.

The *Tribune* ran side-by-side photographs, of Capone and Thompson alone or joined by Serritella. To emphasize the Capone-Thompson link, both the *Tribune* and the *Daily News* reported on primary election day that Chicago's number-one gangster was assisting his candidate at the polls. In fact Capone was present, but not as a campaign worker. The day after the primary he was scheduled to appear in federal court on contempt charges.⁶⁶

None of the allegations deterred Thompson. Big Bill was back, ready with throw-away comments ("I can't see Capone in my lap," he told one audience) and more. He treated a session of the city council to a visit from a cowboy and a cowgirl on horseback; audiences at the Cort Theatre could watch Thompson himself ride a horse onstage. At rallies he brought along halters, one for *Tribune* candidate Lyle, the other for *Daily News* candidate Albert. And a Thompson menagerie paraded down streets: elephant (symbolizing the GOP), camel (Prohibition), horse (Thompson), jackass (Lyle), and burro (Albert). No entertainment was complete without music. Accordingly, the police quartet sang "Happy Days Are Here Again" before Franklin D. Roosevelt could claim it as his own. When the show ended, Thompson had won 296,000 votes to Lyle's 228,000 and Albert's 99,000.⁶⁷

Huey Long and William Randolph Hearst both phoned election-night congratulations. Reportedly, so did Tammany's embattled Jimmy Walker, who quickly wired a denial to Anton Cermak: "Am trying to learn something of New York politics and have no time to become involved in Chicago politics." Thompson immediately unveiled his new campaign song. "Tony, Tony, where's your push cart at?" the first verse taunted the ethnic Cermak. "Can you picture a world's fair mayor with a name like that?" Seven weeks later, Thompson learned the limits of his demagogy.⁶⁸

Like William Dever, Anton Cermak craved recognition. Dever sought WASP respectability, denied Cermak both by birth and thick accent. At age fifty-eight, the Democratic candidate still spoke like an immigrant. But Cermak was not interested in imitating WASPs; he wanted power in his own right. As alderman, state representative, bailiff of the municipal court, and president of the Cook County Board, Cermak won recognition for both himself and the New Immigrants who supported him. "It's true I didn't come over on the Mayflower," he told a campaign audience at the Trianon Ballroom, "but I came over as soon as I could." Chicago's population was more

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than 64 percent immigrant and second-generation, people tired of standing on the fringes of political power. Cermak spoke for them.⁶⁹

Cermak made Democratic leaders uncomfortable because he refused to play the diffident newcomer from Kladno in Austria-Hungary. Unlike most ambitious ethnic politicians, Cermak identified with the reformist, Harrison-Dunne faction of the party. Regular Democrats under Roger Sullivan felt little sympathy for the other side; for them party reformers differed little if at all from Republicans. In time the reform wing of the party was defeated. Cermak emerged as one of the few survivors.

Cermak's ethnicity and cultural background made possible his political independence. Historically, Bohemia was Protestant and one of the most modern regions in Austria-Hungry. Raised in that environment, Cermak was less influenced by Catholicism and tradition than were the Irish; a Protestant reformer did not threaten him the way it would a Roger Sullivan. Also, as a product of Central Europe, Cermak was accustomed to heterogenous populations; there were always Moravian, Polish, and Slovakian neighbors living down the road. In contrast, their experience with the English tended to give the Irish an us-versus-them view of politics.

While too proud a Bohemian to admit it, Cermak survived with the political instincts of a Hapsburg—he knew how to organize and build political coalitions. Cermak began with Bohemians, both Gentiles and Jews. Concentrated on the West Side, they recognized Cermak as a community and political leader. Their votes protected him from retribution by party regulars.⁷⁰

By 1915 Cermak was building a third, ethnic, Democratic faction. As bailiff he controlled his own power base and, as the city's leading wet, an attractive issue. Anyone who attacked Cermak the politician immediately confronted Cermak the secretary of the United Societies; the group had been fighting temperance efforts since 1904. In 1931 Cermak and Thompson emerged as Chicago's two great wets, with one difference: The Democrat had consistently opposed temperance and Prohibition while Thompson had not. And in organizing the countywide Prohibition referendum in 1922, Cermak also emerged as the politician who did not seek to break the law but change it.⁷¹

Cermak expanded his power by attracting ethnic voters. It was not simply a matter of patronage or backroom dealing; Cermak was uncommonly sensitive to the immigrant experience. In 1912, he refereed a wrestling match at the Coliseum. The Polish wrestler beat the Bohemian, and Cermak showed in a small way that fairness was an idea that extended across ethnic lines.

Later, in 1930, he again proved himself as something more than an orthodox politician. Party regulars wanted to dump county judge Edmund K. Jarecki because of the judge's persistent attacks on vote fraud. But as new party head, Cermak allowed the renomination of a man called "An Honor to the Name of Pole." Cermak appreciated the value of political symbols. Two years later, he decided not to run for governor. Instead, he chose probate judge Henry Horner, who became the first Jewish governor in American history.⁷²

In a last-ditch effort to protect Irish control of the party, George Brennan forced Cermak's slating for the U.S. Senate in 1928. The selection was not the honor it appeared. Sullivan and Brennan both had lost Senate bids in 1914 and 1926, respectively. Cermak knew that downstate would not quickly elect a Chicago Democrat to the Senate but might—like Edward Dunne in 1912—as governor. To crystallize ethnic support, Cermak invoked a special name when he announced his candidacy in February: "I am entering the campaign [for governor] because I believe that Al Smith should receive the assistance of every person who is against infringement upon personal liberty." A week later he was outmaneuvered and forced to take the Senate nomination. Still, the slating was not the master stroke Brennan envisioned. Cermak ran a close race against Otis Glenn. In Chicago, the Smith revolution assumed an unexpected Cermak dimension: Al Smith polled 630,000 votes to Herbert Hoover's 651,000 and Glenn's 571,000. Cermak nearly beat them all at 649,000 votes.⁷³

The totals gave Cermak a weapon to use in his next battle, for control of the party organization itself. Brennan had died in August; on his deathbed he had supposedly anointed Michael Igoe as his successor. While Igoe assumed nothing else was needed to ensure continued Irish dominance, Cermak did not agree. He was a Freethinker for whom the dead, particularly an Irish party chairman, did not carry much weight in the affairs of the living. Following the November elections, Cermak consolidated his control over the county Democratic organization by mobilizing the support of ethnic and dissident Irish leaders.⁷⁴

Cermak had spent part of his youth working as a coal miner in Braidwood, sixty-five miles southwest of the city. In Chicago he became a self-employed teamster, as Thompson's song reminded voters; neither occupation helped refine political style. Cermak was entirely comfortable slinging mud at an opponent; during the Senate campaign, he charged that Otis Glenn was a dry who had been treated for delirium tremens. But Cermak also knew he could not out-demagogue Thompson, at least in English. So he transformed himself into an avuncular Horatio Alger character.

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Campaign advertisements and literature portrayed a coal-miner-cumpublic-servant who by day led the county through Depression uncertainty and at night sat surrounded by his grandchildren. Cermak campaign appearances often included an introduction by his twelve-year-old granddaughter. Voters thus were offered a choice between a dedicated, widowed grandfather and Thompson, childless and increasingly estranged from his wife. They opted for the image of success, family, and stability.⁷⁵

Thompson responded to Cermak's carefully measured campaign with a series of crude, personal attacks. "All the Jews and the Irish and the Poles and the Germans are going to the polls to tell that bozo where to get off" was a typical anti-Cermak comment. Thompson told supporters at the Apollo, "For the first time in my life, I saw the Irish lay down to a Bohunk. Something tells me the Irish on April 7 are going to tell this Bohunk" they had taken enough. But Thompson was twice mistaken. Cermak had fashioned a political reputation as the great non-Irish, not simply Bohemian, hope.⁷⁶

In Washington, there seemed nothing at all inevitable about Thompson's defeat. With the election twelve days off, Thompson sent a messenger to see Herbert Hoover. Board of education attorney Thomas Sullivan delivered Thompson's obituary, as written for publication in the *Tribune*. Drawn up during Thompson's emergency appendectomy in October, the piece somehow had been leaked to its subject. During the campaign, it was reprinted as a flier to show how even the mayor's bitterest enemy admitted, "In his three decades of political activity, he has put his unmistakable stamp upon men and affairs." With an unexpected display of subtlety, Thompson advised Hoover that, as one report of his demise proved premature, so might another.⁷⁷

Five days later, the White House received a second Chicago visitor, E. J. Davis, superintendent of the Better Government Association. Upset over the prospects of a wet and ethnic mayor, the association had endorsed Thompson. The recommendation caught its recipient by surprise. "They have never been for me before," Thompson noted. "I don't know whether they're [really] for me now. All I could make out of their report is that the other fellow is twice as bad as I am." Davis traveled to Washington to gauge the extent of White House involvement—direct or indirect—in the Chicago election. Of particular interest was a rumor circulated by Thompson that Cermak was under investigation for income tax evasion. Davis was told the administration had no interest in Chicago politics and was assured that if possible Treasury Department action had been stalled, it would resume.⁷⁸

The only last-minute help came from the state's attorney, and it was not intended for Thompson. On the same day Davis visited the White House, John Swanson raided the city hall offices of Daniel Serritella; the city sealer's records had assumed sudden importance. Within twenty-four hours, Chicagoans were treated to newspaper stories of possible corruption in Serritella's office. The most damaging, that Serritella belonged to a conspiracy that defrauded Depression-weary consumers of \$54 million by short weights, appeared forty-eight hours before the election. The charges ultimately were dismissed on appeal in November 1933, much too late for Thompson. When vote totals were telegraphed to the White House, Herbert Hoover could see how allegations of corruption—along with massive unemployment—affected an election. Thompson had lost to Cermak by 194,000 votes.⁷⁹

Since 1917 critics had regularly predicted Thompson's defeat only to be proven wrong. There was little to say in 1931 that had not been printed before. By giving Cermak his own byline, the *Atlanta Constitution* came closest in offering a new slant to an old story. "The wonderful expression of confidence on the part of the voters on Tuesday has written the story of the future of Chicago," Cermak wrote; the article then recycled Chicago campaign promises for Southern readers. Otherwise, most observers merely wished Chicago well for having thrown off Thompson.⁸⁰

There were two notable exceptions. "The prize for a distorted interpretation of the mayoralty election in Chicago ought to go to United States senator [J. Hamilton] Lewis," believed the *New York Times*. "He declares that it shows Illinois has ceased to be a Republican state." The political situation there was so unique that "Nothing in all this proves that Chicago may not vote tumultuously for President Hoover next year, if he is nominated." The *Times* miscalculated by nearly 249,000 votes.⁸¹

In Chicago the *Tribune* considered Thompson a final time, without the generosity of its earlier obituary:

For Chicago Thompson has meant filth, corruption, idiocy and bankruptcy. He has given our city an international reputation for moronic buffoonery, barbaric crime, triumphant hoodlumism, unchecked graft and a dejected citizenship. He has ruined the property and completely destroyed the pride of the city. He made Chicago a byword for the collapse of American civilization. In his attempt to continue this he excelled himself as a liar and defamer of character. He's out.

He is not only out, but he is dishonored. He is deserted by his friends. He is permanently marked by the evidence of his character and conduct. His health is impaired by his way of life, and he leaves office and goes from the city the most discredited man who ever held place in it.

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The image of the demagogue was treated to the exclusion of reasons for his success. Those lay beyond the scope of any editorial.⁸²

Notes

- 1. Chicago Tribune editorial, Apr. 8, 1927.
- 2. Thomas Donnelley, *The Plain Truth*, Chicago Employers' Association pamphlets, Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS).
 - 3. Ibid.
- 4. Employers' News newsletter, Apr. 1928, Employers' Association pamphlets, CHS.
 - 5. Who's Who in Chicago, 1926.
- 6. Gordon L. Hostetter and Thomas Quinn Beesley, *It's a Racket!* (Chicago: Les Quinn Books, 1929), 13–14, 25; Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), 2:967. The Hostetter and Beesley book was printed, appropriately, by the open-shop R. R. Donnelley and Sons, Thomas E. Donnelley president. Hostetter was executive secretary of the Employers' Association.

One of the rackets described involved butlers and housemaids: "What devil of absurdity took possession of the worthy who started this particular racket, one can only hazard a guess." The racket included "a definite schedule of hours of service and of 'days off' that was nicely calculated to foist additional servants on the already sufficiently distracted housewife!" Apparently, the good domestic did not require much by way of sleep or personal time (155–56).

- 7. Hostetter and Beesley, *It's a Racket!* photo opposite 38, and photo in Chicago Employers' Association, *Write Your Own Headline*, CHS.
- 8. For Capone's earnings, see John Kobler, Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 233; for the Employers' Association estimate, see Kobler, 231; for a discussion of Becker, see Hostetter and Beesley, It's a Racket! 37–41; for Becker's remark, see Kobler, 235.
- 9. For Becker's testimony, see Morrison Handsaker, "The Cleaning and Dyeing Industry: A Case Study in 'Controlled' Competition" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 128; for Capone's offer, see *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 4, 1930. McGoorty was conducting an investigation of racketeering.

The Capone myth has yet to be separated from the reality. According to John Kobler, \$10 million of his organization's \$105 million gross in 1928 came from racketeering. If that figure is accurate, Capone's offer to McGoorty does not make sense. With the repeal of Prohibition inevitable, Capone should have wanted to protect a steady source of income. Further, his desire in late 1930 to maintain control of liquor trafficking does not suggest he was a gangster suffering at the hands of Eliot Ness and the Untouchables. Kobler, Capone, 233. Laurence Bergreen, Capone's most recent biographer, virtually ignores the gangster's interest in labor

and business racketeering in *Capone: The Man and the Era* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

- 10. Hostetter and Beesley, It's a Racket! photo caption of massacre opposite 66.
- 11. For the union "angle," see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 21, 1929, Feb. 22, 1929; for Nelson's denial of involvement in the massacre, see *Chicago Daily News*, Feb. 21, 1929; signed memo by Rosenwald on Swanson, box 39, folder 2, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Rosenwald did not mention the amount of stock offered or Swanson's response.
 - 12. Federation News, July 14, 1928.
- 13. McCormick quoted in State of New York, Proceedings of the Governor's Conference on Crime, the Criminal, and Society, September 30-October 3, 1935 (Albany: J. B. Lyon, 1935; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 45.
- 14. Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, *Illinois Crime Survey* (Chicago: Illinois Association for Criminal Justice in cooperation with the Chicago Crime Commission, 1929), 11–21. In all likelihood, Thomas Donnelley also served as a director of the Illinois Association for Criminal Justice. However, the name is listed as Thomas R. rather than Thomas E.; there are no directory listings for the former.
- 15. For the description of Vollmer, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, *Crime Survey*, 358; for the recommendations, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, 365.
 - 16. Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, Crime Survey, 728.
- 17. For Shaw and Myers's recommendations, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, Crime Survey, 726–28; Taylor quoted in Thomas Lee Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880–1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 62.
- 18. For biographical information, see John Landesco, Organized Crime in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), xiv-xvii; for the feudal system, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, Crime Survey, 1027; for the Thompson-Capone link, see Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, 902.
 - 19. Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, Crime Survey, 979-97.
- 20. Lloyd Lewis and John Justin Smith, Chicago: The History of Its Reputation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 483-84.
- 21. For the contribution charge, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1931. The story of the meeting with Capone is repeated in Kobler, *Capone*, 13–17, and John H. Lyle, *The Dry and Lawless Years* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1960), 185–87.
- 22. For the charity game, see *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 10, 1931; for Capone as benefactor and public figure, see Kobler, *Capone*, 313 (quote).
- 23. For Herbert Hoover's crime strategy, see James D. Calder, "A President and a Gangster: Hoover, Capone, and the Power to Zap," paper presented at the annual conference of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Louisville, Ky., Mar. 23–27, 1982, copy available at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West

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Branch, Iowa. According to Calder, Hoover was motivated solely by the urge to rid society of a dangerous criminal.

It is possible, of course, that I failed to locate all relevant material. One of the difficulties with Freedom of Information requests is that they are, figuratively, shots in the dark. My initial request for information on Capone and Daniel Serritella, the reputed gangster link to city hall, prompted the Justice Department to release twelve pages of documents. I then rephrased the request to ask for all information on Capone; I received some twenty-six pounds of documents.

- 24. Loesch to J. Edgar Hoover, Sept. 13, 1924; letter of introduction, May 29, 1924; and Christmas wishes, Dec. 27, 1934, all in FBI File 62.27427, Subject—Chicago Crime Commission/Secret Six, Freedom of Information Act request.
- 25. Copy of Loesch to Borah, Mar. 23, 1932, Subject File Judiciary—Judges, Circuit 7, Presidential Papers, Hoover Presidential Library; for Wilkerson as presiding judge, see Bergreen, *Capone*, 436–37.
 - 26. Loesch to Borah, Mar. 23, 1932.
- 27. Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker*, 1920–1933 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1966; reprint, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), 211–12, 411–12.
- 28. Merriam quoted in National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, Wickersham Commission Reports (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931; reprint, Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1968), 1:131. The commission also supported Prohibition.
- 29. For Merriam's remarks, see President's Research Committee on Social Trends, Recent Social Trends in the United States: Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), 1539-40. Merriam served as research committee vice-chairman, which may explain the presence of seven committee members from the University of Chicago.
- 30. Herbert Asbury, Gem of the Prairie: An Informal History of the Chicago Underworld (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940; reprint, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 142-54.
 - 31. Bergreen, Capone, 86-87.
- 32. Harrison receives an overdue reassessment in Edward R. Kantowicz, "Carter H. Harrison II: The Politics of Balance," in *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition*, ed. Paul M. Green and Melvin G. Holli (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).
- 33. Murder figures from Illinois Association for Criminal Justice, Crime Survey, 611, and New York Crime Commission, Report of the Crime Commission (Albany: J. B. Lyon, 1928; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 46; for ethnicity and language, see Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1923, 797–98. There were 45 gang-related murders in 1926 and 37 in 1927.
- 34. Accident figure computed from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1933, 813; for the industrial accidents, see State of Illinois, Thirteenth Administrative Report of the Directors of the Departments under the Civil Administrative Code for the

Year July 1, 1929, to June 30, 1930 (published by the authority of the State of Illinois, 1930), 1430; Chesterton quoted in Kobler, Capone, 297.

New York gangs also may have been more adept at keeping the peace during Prohibition, which suggests a more accommodating if corrupt political environment.

- 35. New York Times, Aug. 16, 1930, Aug. 19, 1930, Aug. 28, 1930.
- 36. For the Lingle murder, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 1930; for background, see Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, *Big Bill of Chicago* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 316; for the *Chicago Tribune* charges against other papers, see the July 13, 1930, and June 16, 1930, issues.
- 37. For Kelly, see Roger Biles, Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward J. Kelly of Chicago (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 106–10; for Daley's political roots, see Len O'Connor, Clout: Mayor Daley and His City (New York: Avon Books, 1976), 18–19; for Daley and the First Ward, see Mike Royko, Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago (New York: Signet, 1971), 71–72; for the Blackstone Rangers, see Nicholas Lemann, The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 245–49; for the El Rukns, see Gary Rivlin, Fire on the Prairie: Chicago's Harold Washington and the Politics of Race (New York: Henry Holt, 1992), 136; for the new look of street gangs, see Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26, 1993, Feb. 18, 1994; for the contract, see Chicago Tribune, July 20, 1994, Aug. 4, 1994.
 - 38. Chicago Sun-Times, Aug. 29, 1994.
- 39. Robert Isham Randolph, "Business Fights Crime in Chicago," Saturday Evening Post, Aug. 16, 1930, 12.
 - 40. Ibid., 13, 141.
- 41. Dennis E. Hoffman, Scarface Al and the Crime Crusaders: Chicago's Private War against Capone (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 164–69.
- 42. For the turf battle between Swanson and the Secret Six, see FBI File 62.27764, Subject John A. Swanson, Freedom of Information Act request; for the Employers' Association and the Secret Six, see W. A. McSwain to J. Edgar Hoover, Sept. 14, 1932, FBI file 62.27427, Chicago Crime Commission/Secret Six.
- 43. For Gore and Paddock, see Dennis E. Hoffman, Business vs. Organized Crime: Chicago's Private War on Al Capone, 1929–1932 (Chicago: Publication of the Chicago Crime Commission, 1989), 25; Loesch quoted in New York Times, Mar. 23, 1930; for the ethnicity of Johnson, Ness, and Loesch, see Bergreen, Capone, 274, 344, 365.

Bergreen argues that "no matter how many stills Eliot Ness smashed or bootleggers he arrested, nothing he did contributed to the government's case against Al Capone" (344).

44. Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties (New York: Harper and Row Perennial Library, 1964), 223; John Gunther, "The High Cost of Hoodlums," Harper's, Oct. 1929.

- 45. Hostetter and Beesley, It's a Racket! 209; Allen, Only Yesterday, 219.
- 46. For the relief figures, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 17, 1931; for unemployment, see Alex Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago: A Study of Political Leadership* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 241.
- 47. For more on Thompson and Lowden, see chap. 4; Mellon quoted in *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 1, 1930; for the city's financial woes, see *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1930, Jan. 6, 1930, Feb. 14, 1930.
- 48. For background, see Herbert D. Simpson, Tax Racket and Tax Reform in Chicago (Chicago: Institute for Economic Research, 1930), chaps. 1, 2; for deviation, see Simpson, 43.
- 49. Proverb quoted in Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 31; for building and loans, see Gottfried, *Boss Cermak*, 44–45, and Edward R. Kantowicz, "Polish Chicago: Survival through Solidarity," in *Ethnic Chicago*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, revised and expanded (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 218–19.
- 50. Cook County Board, *Proceedings of the County Board*, Oct. 25, 1926, Jan. 4, 1927. Cermak did not merely vote for the measure, he sponsored it. Newspaper photographs reprinted in Herbert D. Simpson, *The Tax Situation in Illinois* (Chicago: Institute for Research in Land Economics and Public Utilities, 1929), 64–68; for a new reassessment, see Simpson, *Tax Racket*, 132.
- 51. National Industrial Conference Board, *The Fiscal Problem in Illinois* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1927), 57–58; Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 178–81.
- 52. For payroll problems, see Chicago Tribune, Dec. 21, 1929, Jan. 24, 1930, Feb. 14, 1930; for coverage of the situation (and cartoons), see Herbert D. Simpson, "Chicago's Financial Crisis," Review of Reviews (Apr. 1930), and Lloyd Lewis, "Poor, Insolvent Chicago," The Outlook and Independent, Feb. 26, 1930; for an estimate of delinquent taxes by then-alderman Paul H. Douglas, see Gene DeLon Jones, "The Local Political Significance of New Deal Legislation in Chicago, 1933–1940" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1970), 19; for more recent photos and complaints on real estate taxes, see Chicago Sun-Times, Apr. 16, 1986.

As the situation worsened in early 1930, a citizens' committee formed to raise money for local and county government by selling tax warrants. Philip Clarke, a banker and veteran of Liberty Bond drives, coordinated sales while the lawyer Silas Strawn and others negotiated the release of some \$50 million to government agencies by June 1930. *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 22, 1930, Feb. 23, 1930, Mar. 9, 1930, Mar. 13, 1930, May 10, 1930, June 3, 1930.

- 53. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 312-16; Stuart, Incredible Years, 384-86.
- 54. Jack Beatty, The Rascal King: The Life and Times of James Michael Curley, 1874–1958 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1992), 269; Thomas Kessner, Fiorel-

lo La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 346-47.

- 55. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 317-18.
- 56. Ibid., 318-19.
- 57. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 16, 1930.
- 58. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Oct. 31, 1930.
- 59. For the pamphlet, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 24, 1930; for Lewis's remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1920; for DePriest, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1930.
- 60. County vote total (757,623 for Lewis to 287,290 for McCormick) from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1931, 727; for the black vote percentage, see John M. Allswang, A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890–1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), table 3:1, 42; for Thompson's rebuff, see Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 319; for DePriest's loss, see Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 90–91.
- 61. Alden B. Baxter, "We Need Depressions—They Mould Men and Nations," Chicago Commerce 27 (Apr. 4, 1931): 26.
- 62. For the sickbed anecdote, see Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 441; copy of speech in Ruth Hanna McCormick, General Correspondence, Hanna-McCormick Family Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; for safety measures, see Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 456.
- 63. For Thompson's comment, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1930; "Chicago Prosperity Drive" flier and Thompson handout critical of Bogan, Harold F. Gosnell Material, Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library. Surprisingly, the U.S. Post Office and the Federal Radio Commission opened the mails and airwaves to Thompson's scheme after some minor changes rendered it—technically—something other than a lottery. *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 13, 1930, Dec. 16, 1930.
- 64. Chicago Herald-Examiner, Oct. 10, 1930. Hearst was expelled from France for printing the treaty.
- 65. For the court decision, see *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1930; for background on the primary election, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 322–26, and Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 450–51.
- 66. For charges against Capone, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1931; for pictures, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1931, Feb. 20, 1931; for the Capone stories, see *Chicago Daily News*, Feb. 24, 1931, *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 24, 1931; for an apolitical treatment of Capone's presence, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Feb. 25, 1931.

Serritella undoubtedly had links to organized crime and later testified before the Kefauver Committee. However, his success as a Republican ward committeeman and state senator (1930–42) reflected a Capone-like ability to appear as more than a gangster. In 1930 he convinced Italian laborers to accept blacks as co-workers on South Side streetcar-line construction crews. The *Chicago Defender* compliment-

ed Serritella for helping break the color line "so as to give our workers a chance to hold jobs." Sept. 20, 1930.

- 67. For Thompson's remark, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Feb. 20, 1931; for other antics, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 14, 1931, Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 323–29, and Stuart, *Incredible Years*, 459; vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1932, 700.
- 68. For calls and the song, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 25, 1931; for Walker's denial, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 27, 1931.
- 69. H. Bobino, "Chicago Mayoral Election of 1931," Gosnell Material, Merriam Papers.
 - 70. Gottfried, Boss Cermak, chaps. 1-7.
- 71. For more on the United Societies, see chap. 2; for more on the referendum, see chap. 6.
- 72. For the wrestling match, see Paul M. Green, "Irish Chicago: The Multi-Ethnic Road to Machine Success," *Ethnic Chicago*, 442; for Jarecki, see Douglas Bukowski, "Judge Edmund K. Jarecki: A Rather Regular Independent," *Chicago History* 8 (Winter 1979–80): 210–13; for Horner's slating, see Gottfried, *Boss Cermak*, 290–93, 310.
- 73. For slating and Cermak's remark, see *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 12, 1928, Feb. 17, 1928; vote totals rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1929, 740, 750.
- 74. For the succession fight, see *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 10, 1928, Aug. 12, 1928, and Gottfried, *Boss Cermak*, chap. 10. One of those claiming to have heard Brennan's directive was his brother-in-law Joseph L. Gill, party chairman in the early 1950s.
- 75. For Cermak's background, see Gottfried, Boss Cermak, chaps. 1, 2; for the Senate charge, see Chicago Tribune, Nov. 3, 1928; for a photo of Cermak with grandchildren, see From Mine Boy to Chief Executive (1931); for campaign appearances with his granddaughter, see Chicago Tribune, Mar. 29, 1931, Apr. 5, 1931; for Thompson's marriage, see John H. Williamson, I Met an American (privately printed, 1951), 169–70. According to Kogan and Wendt, Cermak transformed himself on the recommendation of an advisor. Big Bill, 331–32.
- 76. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 26, 1931, Mar. 28, 1931. Thompson was very specific in attacking Cermak; there was no broad-based nativism. The *Tribune* described a typical rally: "As usual his speech was largely an attack on the *Tribune* and an appeal to the Jews, Irish, Germans and Poles to vote against Cermak." Thompson also promised, "If you Poles vote for Bill Thompson, I'll load that city hall up with Poles." *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 2, 1931, Apr. 6, 1931.
- 77. Obituary reprinted in Williamson, An American, 200; for Sullivan's visit of Mar. 26, 1931, see Secretary's File William Hale Thompson, Presidential Papers, Hoover Presidential Library.
- 78. For Davis's visit of Mar. 31, 1931, see Subject File Republican National Committee, Illinois, Presidential Papers, Hoover Presidential Library; for Thomp-

son's tax charge and comment, see *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Mar. 25, 1931, Mar. 27, 1931.

79. For the raid, see Chicago Daily News, Apr. 1, 1931; for the short weights, see Chicago Herald-Examiner, Apr. 5, 1931; for the disposition of charges, see Stuart, Incredible Years, 467; memos based on telegram vote totals, Subject File Republican National Committee, Illinois, Presidential Papers. Cermak defeated Thompson 671,189 votes to 476,267. Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1932, 704. The only groups Thompson carried were blacks (84 percent) and Italians (53 percent). Based on figures in Allswang, House, table 3:1, 42.

80. Atlanta Constitution, Apr. 9, 1931.

81. New York Times, Apr. 9, 1931; vote total rounded off to the nearest thousand from Chicago Daily News Almanac, 1933, 799.

82. Chicago Tribune, Apr. 9, 1931.

9

Changing Roles

The two daughters led the hysterical mother out of the room, and the nurse covered the face of Studs Lonigan with a white sheet.

—James T. Farrell, Judgment Day

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY was in serious trouble coming out of the 1930 Congressional elections. Ignacio Izsak knew this firsthand as a veteran of the 1928 and 1930 campaigns. But would party leaders listen to an argument for change?

Hoping they would, Izsak wrote to Walter H. Newton, personal secretary of Herbert Hoover, in late November 1930. Izsak reported on the work of Anton Cermak, who had convinced the National Democratic Committee to fund an ethnic voter drive. Cermak helped find "a staff of able foreign newspapermen and organizers of the various groups, six months before the election. They supplied the foreign press of the Middle West with articles unfavorable to the [Hoover] administration."

Izsak was bothered that Republicans did not even seem aware of the prize they were in danger of losing: "I wish also to emphasize that the Democrats, generally speaking, display a better understanding in handling the foreign citizens. They put up numerous candidates from the various groups, thereby ensuring the support of those groups. The Republicans, on the other hand, seem to think they can get along without them." Izsak warned that, while New Immigrants represented the balance of power in the large industrial states, the party refused leading ethnic Republicans "any recognition whatever. The rank and file, realizing that their respective lead-

ers are not getting any credit, are deserting them because they realize that the Republican Party is unmindful of the services rendered by the leaders to the party." "No, my dear Mr. Secretary," Izsak continued, "I am more and more convinced that the Election of 1932 will be decided by the foreign citizenry. They comprise about 33 per cent of the constituents. Accordingly, if the majority of them sides with one or the other party, that party will walk away with the victory."²

Ignacio Izsak knew his politics. So did the mercenary in city hall who realized that ethnic voters would comprise the bulk of any truly effective urban political organization. Thompson had been assembling his forces since at least 1920. His appearance at the rally for Terrence MacSwiney, held two days before the presidential election, had cast Warren Harding and Big Bill Thompson as the friends of Irish independence. Seven years later, he lampooned the university professor and school superintendent to exploit ethnic alienation with WASP business, cultural, and political institutions. Beneath the bluster lay the makings of a Smith revolution.³

The *Tribune* was not particularly fond of post-1776 revolutions—or the rebellious spirit of a place like Hamtramck, Michigan, where Polish residents may have balked at the demands of assimilation. An immigrant community that "violently resents the use of the American language and government under American laws" posed a danger, an editorial warned in December 1923, and such a threat "must be understood if the present Congress is to take essential action toward eliminating" the problem.⁴

Those belonging to the party of dominant cultural values were bound to agree. Republicans had little use for communities or politicians who dissented from the politics of WASP America. Al Smith offended because he so dissented. For that he was rebuked by people such as Shailer Mathews, dean of the divinity school at the University of Chicago. Speaking at a faculty discussion of the 1928 election, Mathews declared, "The spectacle of Al Smith, the Catholic, crying for tolerance seems to me no more reasonable than the spectacle of Al Smith, the Tammanyite, shouting for government reform." 5

Critics dismissed Thompson much the same way. He was clown, crook, and demagogue, anything but an indicator of impending change. National Republicans treated Thompson with care as a difficult but popular local leader until the events of 1928 betrayed him. "The great difference between the national Republican Party and the national Democratic Party... is that we did not nominate William Hale Thompson of Chicago for President," Colonel Theodore Roosevelt Jr. said during the 1928 campaign. "They did nominate the leader of Tammany Hall."

This Roosevelt misunderstood the political upheaval that Izsak and Thompson sensed was coming; local Republicans repeated his mistake. No one challenged Thompson for the voter base he began staking out in 1920. Instead, party leaders were content to define themselves solely by the extent of their opposition to Big Bill Thompson. They ignored blacks, ethnic groups, and labor for the chance to lead a steadily shrinking WASP Chicago. Edward Brundage, Charles Deneen, and others discovered in the 1927 mayoral election that being anti-Thompson did not count for much at all.⁷

During his third term, Thompson built a prototype machine based on class, ethnicity, and race as he isolated reformers and their financial backers. The business community had tired of spending good money on near-hopeless opposition campaigns. After 1927 it would take what city hall offered: Business leaders stayed out of politics in exchange for public works. A momentous political peace was at hand, but the mercenary responsible never fully enjoyed the fruits of his work. Initially, he let himself be distracted by America First and presidential fantasies. Then came the Crashfor Wall Street, the Republican Party, and William Hale Thompson.

Anton Cermak built on Thompson's prototype, yet, skilled as he was, Cermak might not have succeeded without the Depression. Chicago's decentralized form of government ordinarily barred the formation of strong political machines. The Depression gave Cermak the mayor's office and the chance for more. State's Attorney, Cook County Board, Sanitary District—these and other offices finally came under Democratic control in the 1930s. By waving the bloody shirt of the Crash, Chicago Democrats dominated elections and controlled virtually every government office in the city and county.⁸

In 1932 Cermak appealed to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) for funds to keep city government working. The RFC hesitated, though not at the request of all Chicagoans. Banker and former vice president Charles Dawes easily received \$90 million for his Central Republic Bank; Dawes had resigned as RFC president only weeks before the loan was granted. The incident was part of a Depression experience that transformed two generations of Chicago voters into reflexive Democrats.⁹

The unemployed and their families did not understand Herbert Hoover's aiding a bank before a city. Where Thompson manufactured resentment against the wealthy for a campaign or two, the Depression bred it over the course of decades. The suffering associated with the 1930s was coupled with unquestioning gratitude for the party, both local and national, that provided relief. That appreciation extended the full twenty-one years of Richard J. Daley's mayoralty.

Daley's death in 1976 did not so much signal the end of a machine as the passing of the second generation of Depression-Era voters. With the advent of Michael Bilandic, blizzards, and Jane Byrne, Chicago politics reverted to its 1920s form; government offices again served as factional power bases. The city council, park district, and state's attorney's office all gave refuge to Democrats critical of Harold Washington. Whether or not anyone knew, Chicago history was repeating itself.

Following Thompson's defeat, Arthur Schlesinger Sr. wrote Charles Merriam: "After reading your canned speech on the mayoralty campaign, I have made a mental resolve that before I run for high office I shall first make sure of your support. No wonder the [politically] late Bill Thompson lost out." Both scholars served as Thompson punchlines at political rallies in 1927, and both now enjoyed his demise. But in at least one sense their celebration was premature—Thompson's fall did not parallel Jimmy Walker's. The arrival of a Chicago Fiorello La Guardia was greatly delayed.¹⁰

Anton Cermak, though, did tolerate reformers and good-government types because he realized they served a useful purpose. In 1926 allegations surfaced that the county had bought park land at inflated prices. Suddenly, Cermak found his reputation as Cook County Board president in doubt. He answered with a citizens' forest preserve oversight committee under the leadership of Abel Davis, a banker; this was not how Thompson responded to situations. Such attention to appearances yielded dividends in 1931. Cermak won mayoral endorsements from Jane Addams, Harold Ickes, Julius Rosenwald, and Charles Merriam.¹¹

As mayor Cermak again made use of the reform community when he appointed Leonard D. White to the civil service commission. A University of Chicago professor and contributor to the prestigious *Recent Social Trends*, White accepted his appointment with all seriousness, which only increased his frustrations. He complained of irregular meetings and exam practices, part of what he called the commission's "drift and indecision." When he tried posting an eligibility list for the public works department, fellow commissioners objected on the grounds it was "full of Thompson niggers." 12

Cermak exploited reformers and business leaders the way Richard J. Daley would, as necessity or political advantage required. The forces of good government were thoroughly domesticated—always ready to serve and little inclined to challenge. Thompson had made them that way. Charles Merriam regularly accused him of illicit dealings with Samuel Insull, debasing civil service, and driving Dr. Theodore Sachs to suicide,

all to little effect. Merriam's reward for serving as public conscience was humiliation (18,000 votes to Thompson's 124,000) in the 1919 mayoral primary.¹³

As the 1920s unfolded, reformers continued their retreat from local politics. Some, like Merriam, took refuge in the university until government service called; others staffed advocacy groups in the hope that an issue framed properly could turn a particular election or legislative vote. The old Progressive days—when a candidate tilted at windmills in the guise of political machines—simply were no more. The total disintegration of local reform politics became clear in 1930, when voters considered a traction-unification ordinance. The proposal would have unified el and streetcar lines, put the city in control of a proposed subway, and created a hybrid public-private system. One of the intended beneficiaries was Samuel Insull, whose Commonwealth Edison had been operating the elevated lines since a loan default in 1914. For years reformers had linked Thompson and Insull through corporation counsel Samuel Ettelson; nothing Thompson said about utilities or a five-cent fare was believable because it was common knowledge he was "owned" by Insull. If the plan was good for Insull, reformers reasoned that it had to be bad for everyone else. So Merriam, Harold Ickes, and Donald Richberg helped form the People's Traction League to fight the referendum.14

Richberg asked Clarence Darrow for a public statement against the ordinance. Darrow, who had done so much to keep Thompson allies out of jail, demurred: "Really, the fight looks so hopeless, everything is so fully greased. Everyone is lined up, and I don't see a chance. I couldn't get into the fight without going into it thoroughly, and I don't want to undertake the work of it all. You know I am old and tired." Darrow spoke for both a movement and himself. The ordinance passed by a margin of better than five to one. 15

Increasingly, reformers would rely on Washington as deus ex machina. Merriam, Ickes, and Richberg all worked for Roosevelt's New Deal; the belief in centralized government came easy to the disillusioned veterans of local reform movements. Black Chicagoans, whatever their talents, did not have the same options. Washington was as yet unprepared to bestow many rewards on the descendants of slaves.

For his part, Robert Abbott dealt with the immediate situation by with-holding the *Defender*'s endorsement in the 1931 mayoral race. Abbott had grown weary of Thompson and distrusted the Democrats. "The Democratic Party is corrupt in its vitals," an editorial charged. "It is the lewd woman of the political camp. Cermak may rise above it. If he does, he will

do more than Woodrow Wilson could ever do." African Americans hoped for recognition and would settle for "peace and protection." If they received even that, "the world will be surprised. The police under Dever was the Democratic Party on horseback." ¹⁶

And Cermak wanted no more of that. He acted as a "special donor" for an Orchestra Hall performance by Marian Anderson and promised to name an African American to the school board. When the campaign finished at Wendell Phillips High School, an ad in the *Defender* urged, "Come and Hear the Truth." The story was not particularly pleasant at first—blacks lost patronage, and the South Side was subjected to another series of vice raids. Still, African Americans gradually shifted their party allegiance. The welcome was lukewarm at best, but race was not the sole reason.¹⁷

In Chicago, politics has endured as a shortcut for newcomers to achieve social status on their own. Success in politics is a kind of manna, as the Irish were first to discover. They were followed by other groups just as hungry for recognition. Ethnic groups fought one another with such intensity that a Bridgeport Pole did not waste energy hating a black man who lived on the other side of Wentworth; there were too many Irish, Italian, and Lithuanian neighbors for that luxury. Blacks were denied full political recognition as Democrats because ethnic groups feared it would come at their expense. If a way could have been found to recognize African Americans while isolating the Irish, various groups would have been more accommodating.

Ironically, the opposite occurred after Cermak's assassination in 1933. Ed Kelly became mayor, and the Democratic hierarchy again fell under Irish control. The party cultivated blacks as it subordinated ethnic groups; when Edmund Jarecki sought renomination for a fifth term as county judge in 1938, the party slated someone else. Ethnic voters may have remembered this kind of slight after the war as they watched Kelly endorse integrated housing and schools.¹⁸

Antagonism stemming from the push for group advancement has never really dissipated in the years since Thompson. A more recent veteran of Chicago politics had a career constrained by both Richard Daleys. He found the experience less than pleasant: "It's the Irish first and everybody else is a Polack. Everybody. I'm Croatian, and to them I was a Polack. The blacks are Polacks. Latinos, everybody. . . . That's how they are." Edward Vrdolyak could just as well have been describing the political world of George Brennan, et al.¹⁹

Black Chicago did not find itself simply outside looking in as other Dem-

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ocratic groups pursued recognition; African Americans desired it every bit as much as Irish and Polish Chicagoans. Each generation in Chicago politics—regardless of color—has sought status for itself while demanding that its successors do likewise. This inherited need for politics is strongest among the Irish and African Americans. Rarely have antagonists been so much alike. For both the loss of freedom was followed by rural poverty and servitude in the extreme. Massive flight led only to cities of cold refuge.

Chicago, at least, offered one hope: A resident's past had no bearing on the right to vote and hold office. It was a path, however crowded and narrow, to advancement. And human emotion demanded that it be traveled more than once. Parents conveyed to children all the old inadequacies and hurts along with the American drive for success. So Richard J. Daley played Chicago politics to make his father proud; son Richard M. then was expected to do the same. Harold Washington was no different. Washington sought office because, in part, he was retracing his father's political life. Roy Washington had been a precinct captain, part of the first generation of black Chicago Democrats.²⁰

That both father and son worked as politicians reflects the influence of Thompson on black Chicago. He was the first white politician to encourage African-American participation. As ethnic groups had found status in electing their own, so did blacks. The experience gained did not end with Thompson's defeat in 1931. Black politicians carried on as Democrats who learned, like Cermak, that success depended on getting along until the right opportunity came their way. When it did in 1983, the mayor elected was a coalition builder in the mold of Anton Cermak.²¹

The paradox of urban politics in the early twentieth century was the way easy answers chased after complex problems. Politicians learned that victory often was the product of simplification and entertainment; voters, regardless of class, liked their elections that way. When he supported Jacob Loeb against the teachers' federation, blamed inflation on Frank Lowden, or threatened to punch the king of England in the nose, Thompson was simply following a proven formula for success. Reelection depended on the use of yet additional exclamation points. Thompson offered these up in concrete and brick, streets and bridges.

The formula worked better than reformers cared to admit. In Boston, John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald sang—and built; James Curley campaigned against a codfish aristocracy—and built. In New York, bon vivant Jimmy Walker amused his public—and built. If anything, the 1930s encouraged this politics of simplification as Americans tried to make sense out of the devastation wrought by the Depression. Father Charles Coughlin explained

everything over the radio—it was the fault of a "cursed famine of currency money which blights our progress." Huey Long then proposed a solution—every man a king. And like Thompson, Long punctuated his realm with a series of public works.²²

Even New York's Fiorello La Guardia simplified. The Little Flower was not afraid to admit, "I can out-demagogue any candidate I have met yet," and he always performed for the cameras. The appointment of Robert Moses to direct public works also gave La Guardia a living, breathing Burnham Plan.²³

Thompson never would have been satisfied as a cowboy. Life on the range did not allow for many boulevard links or ribbon cuttings. The public Thompson lived for such opportunities. Every change of image and demagogic turn had been a means to an end set in blueprints. Opponents in 1931 recalled a career filled with saloon closings, teacher baiting, and corruption; Thompson offered an entirely different view of his public life. But if opponents wanted to make an issue of "Thompsonism," he would help them.

"Thompsonism' means progress, growth, development," declared a pamphlet from the primary. "It has been the greatest single force in the progress of this great city, and, in spite of the efforts of two powerful newspapers, 'Thompsonism' will carry Chicago to a position of power and influence second to no other city in the world." Pictures and figures defined the idea. Thompson made possible 75.5 miles of improvements on major streets; between 1915 and 1923, the Board of Local Improvements accomplished twenty-seven times as much work as done in the previous forty-three years; Thompson built 78 percent of the city's bridges; and he added numerous schools, playgrounds, water pumping stations, and firehouses. Where the south branch of the Chicago River once ran crooked, Big Bill Thompson set it straight so the area could be developed for railroad terminals.²⁴

Never mind that Thompson did not plan or start Municipal Pier; it opened on his watch. And no matter that Chicago mayors were following a plan of development laid out by Daniel Burnham or that public works were a necessity in the modern city. What counted was this particular builder. "Re-elect as your mayor the one man above all others who has proven his ability to do big things—a man of vision—a constructive genius," the pamphlet instructed.²⁵

Ordinarily, Chicagoans would have indulged the politician who claimed to have added \$1 billion to the city's property values. In fact they had elected him three times, forgiven him his sins in office, watched him build, and Changing Roles 253

let him sing about it. Why? Perhaps Kate Sargent was right: Thompson operated as the Great Hypnotist, one who swung a pick in place of a pocket watch. But the Depression had stripped away his powers.²⁶

After twelve years as mayor, the builder-simplifier par excellence was just another Chicagoan out of work. He helped get Len Small nominated for governor in 1932, only to see Small overwhelmed in the Democratic landslide that November. Reputation and party affiliation made Thompson a politician without prospects unless he considered third-party movements. With Huey Long alive, he could hope for a position in the Share the Wealth movement. The Kingfish's assassination in 1935 cost Thompson his only political ally. What followed was the demagogue's response to the threat of finding himself totally irrelevant.²⁷

Thompson founded the Union Progressive party in 1936 as an adjunct to the efforts of William Lemke. In other states Lemke appeared as a standard-bearer of sorts, but he was overshadowed in Illinois by a familiar figure now running for governor. "We are all together," Thompson informed William Borah. "Lemkeites, Townsendites, Huey Longites, Thompsonites, Laborites and the American people are going down the pike together." However, the qualifier "American" was more exclusive this time.²⁸

Thompson had attacked Julius Rosenwald throughout his career; millionaires made good campaign foils, as both Thompson and Maclay Hoyne understood. Long in the public eye, Rosenwald was accustomed to attacks on his wealth, but Thompson introduced a new element during his 1931 campaign: "Well, we got a great philanthropist in this town, and he is a Jew, and he is trying to edge his way out of hell by giving [away] part of the money he steals." The anti-Semitism did not have to be especially virulent. Once introduced, the sickness fed on itself. By 1936 Thompson had moved beyond an attack or two on a Jewish philanthropist. He now addressed a picnic for the Chicago Nazi Clubs to vilify "Reds and Jewish bankers." The overall performance was good for 129,000 votes, more than Lemke received in any state except Ohio. It was Thompson's last major audition for public office. Three years later, he was reduced to the bit role of also-ran in the Republican mayoral primary.²⁹

Thompson did not enjoy watching his political prospects wither. For a time, some of the old issues kept him busy. The question of water diversion from Lake Michigan permitted another trip to Washington, though without the same excitement or intrigue of 1927–28, when Calvin Coolidge struggled for a way to handle Thompson. A decade later, Franklin Roosevelt worried over a different set of demagogues.

Thompson returned to Midwest isolationism a final time in 1937 with

his William Hale Thompson Association to Keep Americans out of Foreign Wars; he used it to get a referendum proposal put on the state ballot the next year. He found some 1.7 million voters who agreed that "all members in the Congress of the United States from the State of Illinois shall vote 'No' on all legislation for the drafting of American boys to fight" outside the United States. But it was a hollow victory. Thompson had grown too old for any meaningful part in the revival of America First. The role of leading man was better played by the boyish Charles Lindbergh.³⁰

Now all but forced off the political stage, Thompson grew increasingly reclusive. He kept a suite in the Congress Hotel, where he was attended by Estabelle Green, a stenographer from his 1931 campaign. Public appearances dwindled, as did visits from friends. The only regular caller was the Reverend John Williamson, the former law enforcement commissioner. After war was declared in 1941, the federal government took over the Congress, and the man who had based so much of his political career on isolationism was forced to move. He died in his suite at the Blackstone Hotel on March 19, 1944, and was buried at Oak Woods Cemetery. Harold Washington would be laid to rest there nearby forty-three years later.

Williamson delivered the eulogy: "By the time people had recovered from the shock of his crudeness and quit their laughing at what appeared to be silly, William Hale Thompson had achieved what he was after." Williamson remembered what most everyone would forget. "Both the virtue and the value of his spectacular methods and speech are to be found in the results he obtained as 'means to an end."³¹

There was no collection of papers to be made public after the burial; that would have drawn the attention of university types. Instead, Thompson left behind a scandal and a test. Some safe-deposit boxes were discovered stuffed with cash, bonds, and stocks totaling \$1.84 million. The cache came as a total surprise. Thompson the outrageous was news again, especially when Estabelle Green filed for half the estate of \$2.1 million. She eventually settled for \$250,000.

Green was not alone in pursuing the estate. Others were interested in a share; the FBI wanted only a peek. The FBI assumed Thompson had been a politician on the take and possibly one who was paid off with stolen property. To satisfy its curiosity, the FBI checked through \$381,000 worth of securities in safe-deposit boxes. There was \$15,350 in Liberty Bonds but nothing stolen. In death as in life, Big Bill Thompson had a way of fooling people.³²

Notes

- 1. Copy of Ignacio Izsak to Walter H. Newton, Nov. 24, 1930, Subject File Republican Party-Foreign Language Groups, Presidential Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.
 - 2. Ibid.
 - 3. For more on the MacSwiney rally, see chap. 4.
 - 4. Chicago Tribune, Dec. 24, 1923.
 - 5. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 16, 1928.
- 6. Roosevelt press release, Oct. 29, 1928, Subject File William Hale Thompson, Campaign and Transition/Campaign Literature/Press Releases, Hoover Presidential Library.
- 7. Kristi Andersen notes the significance of such distaste for the New Immigrant vote. In 1936 the Republican vote in Cook County stood at 701,200, up from 635,200 in 1920 but down from 812,000 in 1928. By not following Thompson's example, the party alienated older members of ethnic groups and their children, who increased Democratic ranks at every election. The Creation of a Democratic Majority, 1928–1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 31, 88–93.
- 8. After the 1936 elections, Chicago Democrats controlled city hall; the board of education; a newly consolidated park district; the county board, assessor, clerk, and sheriff; state's attorney; and sanitary district. This unprecedented control of offices by one party translated into tens of thousands of patronage jobs. Offices and party affiliation in *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1937.
- 9. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 237–40; Alex Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago: A Study of Political Leadership* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 258, 278–79.
- 10. Schlesinger Sr. to Merriam, May 14, 1931, Charles E. Merriam Papers, Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.
- 11. For the charges against Cermak, see *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1926, July 24, 1926; for his response, see *Chicago Daily News*, Mar. 18, 1931; for the endorsements, see Gottfried, *Boss Cermak*, 210–16.

Shortly before the election, Cermak—in his capacity as county board president—appointed Merriam to a citizens' commission on public finance and economy; other members included Sewell Avery, Victor Olander, and Julius Rosenwald. The committee signaled, as Cermak knew it would, that one mayoral candidate was not at war with the city's business and reform communities. Cermak to Merriam, Jan. 6, 1931, Merriam Papers.

- 12. Series of memoranda by Leonard D. White on work of Chicago Civil Service Commission, Merriam Papers.
 - 13. For more on Merriam, see chaps. 2, 3.
- 14. Forrest McDonald, *Insull* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 157–59, 257–61.
 - 15. Darrow to Richberg, June 15, 1930, box 9, Donald R. Richberg Papers,

Chicago Historical Society (hereafter CHS). The vote was 325,468 to 58,212. McDonald, *Insull*, 261. Voters hoped the ordinance would help revive the local economy, but the Depression killed the plan.

- 16. Chicago Defender, Apr. 11, 1931. Ickes served as secretary of the interior, Richberg assisted Hugh Johnson at the National Recovery Administration, and Merriam worked on the National Planning and National Resources Planning Boards. For Merriam and Ickes in Washington, see Barry D. Karl, Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), chaps. 12, 13.
- 17. Chicago Defender, Jan. 31, 1931, Apr. 4, 1931, Apr. 11, 1931; for Cermak's mayoral politics, see Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 133-34, 200-201, 232-33. Cermak polled only 16 percent of the black vote. Given time, he may have become as sensitive to black aspirations as he was to other groups, but the Depression and his assassination in 1933 intervened. For the vote, see John M. Allswang, A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890-1936 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971), table 3:1, 42.
- 18. For Irish party domination, see Douglas Bukowski, "Judge Edmund K. Jarecki: A Rather Regular Independent," *Chicago History* 8 (Winter 1979–80); for Kelly and blacks, see Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward J. Kelly of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 135–37. The party hoped to defeat Jarecki by slating another Polish candidate. The incumbent won, however, and the party chose to leave him alone until his retirement in 1954.
- 19. John Kass, "The New Mayor Daley," Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine, Aug. 25, 1996, 18.
- 20. I explore the group-status dimension of politics in "Chicago and the Politics of the Past," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 26, 1987, and "Political Agendas and Reform Rhetoric: We've Been There Before, Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 8, 1988.
- 21. Most of the work on Harold Washington consists of reminiscences, either personal or professional. The best critical treatment, though short, is John Camper, Cheryl Devall, and John Kass, "The Road to City Hall: The Evolution of Black Political Power in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine*, Nov. 16, 1988.

One of the consequences of Washington's career has been the revival of the Progressive scholar-advocate. See especially William J. Grimshaw, Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931–1991 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and Paul Kleppner, Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985).

- 22. Coughlin quoted in Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 110.
- 23. Thomas Kessner, Fiorello La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), 415.
 - 24. Thompsonism, CHS.
 - 25. Ibid.

- 26. Improvements Made under Mayor Wm. Hale Thompson's Administrations.
- 27. Herman Kogan and Lloyd Wendt, Big Bill of Chicago (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 339-40.
 - 28. Ibid., 343-44.
- 29. For Hoyne's attempted prosecution of Rosenwald for tax evasion, see chap. 2; speech of Mar. 19, 1931, at Dixon School, Merriam Papers; for other attacks, see *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 27, 1931; for his appearance before Nazis, see David H. Bennett, *Demagogues in the Depression: American Radicals and the Union Party,* 1932–1936 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 245–47; vote total rounded off to the nearest thousand from *Chicago Daily News Almanac,* 1937, 796. Lemke received 89,439 votes in Illinois and 132,212 in Ohio. *Chicago Daily News Almanac,* 1937, 759. The FBI also noted in its Thompson reference file that the former mayor had spoken before Nazis.

Dwight H. Green beat Thompson in the Republican primary 210,917 to 62,044. Chicago Tribune, Mar. 1, 1939.

- 30. Kogan and Wendt, Big Bill, 342-47 (quote on 346).
- 31. For Thompson's last years, see John H. Williamson, *I Met an American* (privately printed, 1951), 172-77, and Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 355-58; for the eulogy, see Williamson, 182.
- 32. For the estate controversy, see Kogan and Wendt, *Big Bill*, 357–58; for the search, see FBI File 87–3286 Subject William Hale Thompson, Freedom of Information Act request.

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Big Bill Thompson, Chicago, and the Politics of Image

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