8

What Killed Vote Buying in Britain and the United States?

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In nineteenth-century Britain and the United States, vote buying was commonplace. Parties gave voters cash, food, alcohol, health care, poverty relief, and myriad other benefits in exchange for their votes. To gain leverage over them, parties gathered information about voters' debts, their crimes, even their infidelities.

Today, these forms of distributive politics have basically disappeared from both countries, as they have from most other advanced democracies where they once were practiced. Although money shapes politics in twenty-first-century Britain and even more so in the United States, the practices of clientelism have virtually disappeared. The details of electoral corruption in nineteenth-century Britain and America therefore have a startling feel today. Consider some examples:

- A commission on electoral bribery reported to the House of Commons in 1835 that, in Stafford, £14 were paid per vote cast in a hotly contested election. Polling proceeded over several days, and electors were called to cast their vote in alphabetical order. Those with surnames beginning with A's and B's didn't get much for their votes, "but if the polling lasted two days, the names which began with an S or a W were of the greatest value."[1] "At Leicester," also in 1835, "as soon as the canvass began public houses were opened by each party in the various villages near the borough. The voters were collected as soon as possible, generally locked up until the polling, and according to an election agent, [they were] 'pretty well corned.'"[2]

[1] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 172.
[2] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 173.

- Across the Atlantic Ocean, a party official in Newark, New Jersey, offered the following description of Election Day, 1888:

  "[A] room is secured, generally in the rear of a saloon . . . At this precinct there are a half-dozen men located outside with a pocketful of brass checks . . . When a floater comes along, the outside agents simply make a bargain with him. If the price is $2, they simply give him 2 checks . . . The purchaser sees that the man votes right and tells him to see John Jones in the room at the back of the saloon . . . The voter has simply to get his check cashed."[3]

- In addition to giving out cash on or around Election Day and to treating voters with food and alcohol, British and American parties also secured votes by providing a range of services and assistance, and not just in the brief time before elections but continuously. Like the Tammany Democratic machine, with its emergency relief services, British election agents worked in parallel with religious and charitable organizations to offer voters social insurance. Hence:

  In corporation towns the distribution of charities was an efficacious means of winning votes. In Bristol the control of such distribution was vested entirely in the hands of the Conservatives and formed a ready means of influencing the votes of the poorer classes, as were the Christmas gifts distributed by church wardens and vestries. At Coventry the use of Bablake Hospital was granted only to those electors who had voted in the interest of the Liberal Corporation which controlled it. If an impecunious voter applied for assistance from a poor-law board, instead of retailing the size of his family and the misfortunes which had fallen upon his work, he found it more worth while to begin his plea by stating the colour of his politics.[4]

What, then, killed vote buying in Britain and the United States? The explanation we offer in this chapter focuses on changes in the electorate, changes that were the effects of industrialization and economic growth. We show that industrialization in both countries increased the size and average income of the electorate, made it harder for parties to discern people's votes and monitor their electoral behavior, and reduced the costs of direct communication between candidates and voters, allowing candidates to circumvent brokers. Given the conflicts between leaders and brokers – an unavoidable result of the imperfect agency that brokers rendered to leaders – under changed circumstances, leaders were only too happy to slough off their machines.

Industrialization and economic growth eventually spelled the demise of clientelism in both countries. However, it lingered longer and persisted at higher levels of economic development in the United States. One gets a sense both of the overall decline in both countries and of the longer persistence in the U.S. by comparing the numbers of legal claims of fraudulent elections to the House of Commons and the House of Representatives. In both countries, losing candidates who believed the election had been flawed had formal

[3] Reynolds 1988, p. 54.
[4] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 179; this comes from a report from 1835.

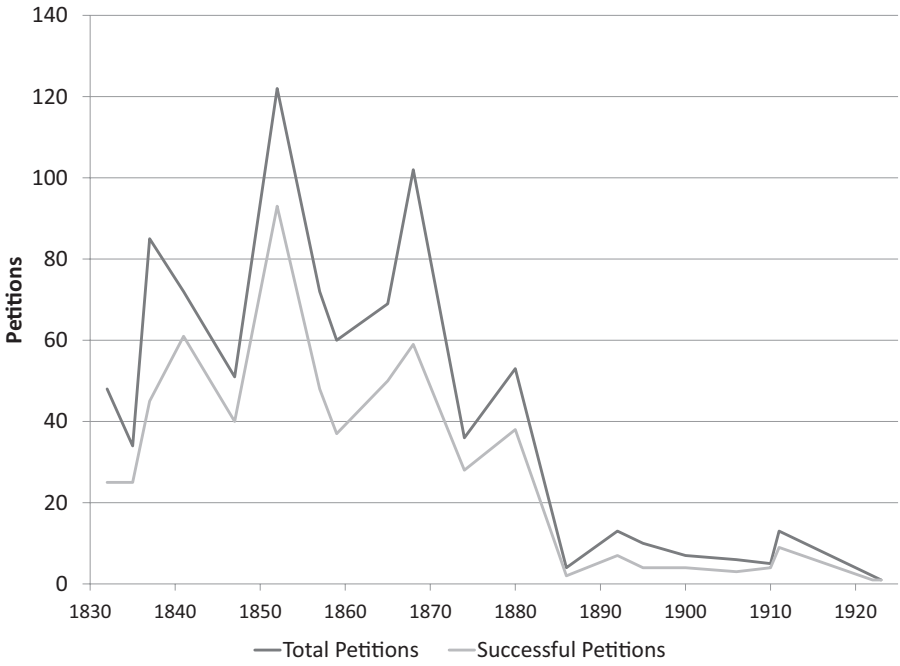

FIGURE 8.1. Petitions Challenging Elections to British House of Commons, 1832–1923. *Source:* Data are from Seymour 1915 and O'Leary 1962.

redress.[5] Figure 8.1 displays the number of petitions claiming fraudulent elections in the U.K. Figure 8.2 displays petitions as a percentage of the total number of seats in the House of Commons (which varied between 658 and 670 throughout this period). Petitions were at their height in the mid-nineteenth century. They declined to a degree after the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872. But they declined more definitively after key electoral reforms passed in the early 1880s. During the remaining years of the nineteenth century, and with the dawn of the twentieth century, accusations of vote buying virtually disappeared.

In some ways the history of electoral challenges in U.S. House elections, displayed in Figures 8.3 and 8.4, tells a similar story – from relatively high levels in the mid-to-late nineteenth century followed by steep decline.[6] The difference lies in the early decades of the twentieth century: whereas petitions

[5] The legal procedures were instituted in the House of Commons as part of the Great Reform Act of 1832. In the U.S. they had existed on an ad hoc basis since the first Congress and were formalized and regularized in 1851. See Seymour 1915 for the history of the procedures in Britain and Jenkins 2004 and Kuo et al. 2011 in the United States.

[6] Figures 8.3 and 8.4 include information from Jenkins 2004. His counts of contested elections, though not historical trends, are slightly different from those found in Kuo et al. 2011.

FIGURE 8.2. Petitions Challenging British Elections, as Percentage of Total Members of Parliament, 1832–1923. *Source:* Data are from Seymour 1915 and from O'Leary 1962.

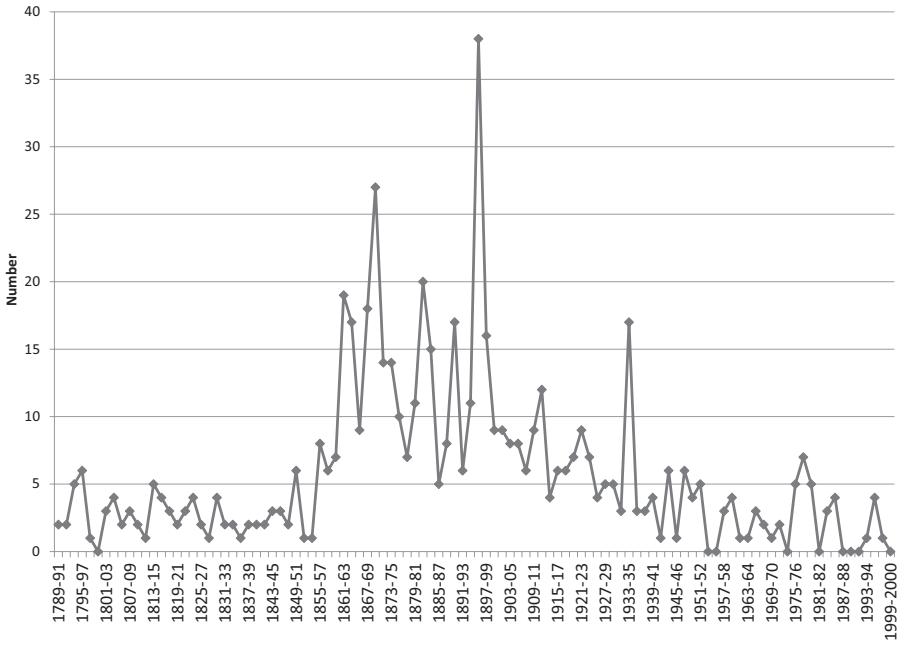

FIGURE 8.3. Number of Contested U.S. Congressional Elections, 1789–2000. *Source:* Data are from Jenkins 2004.

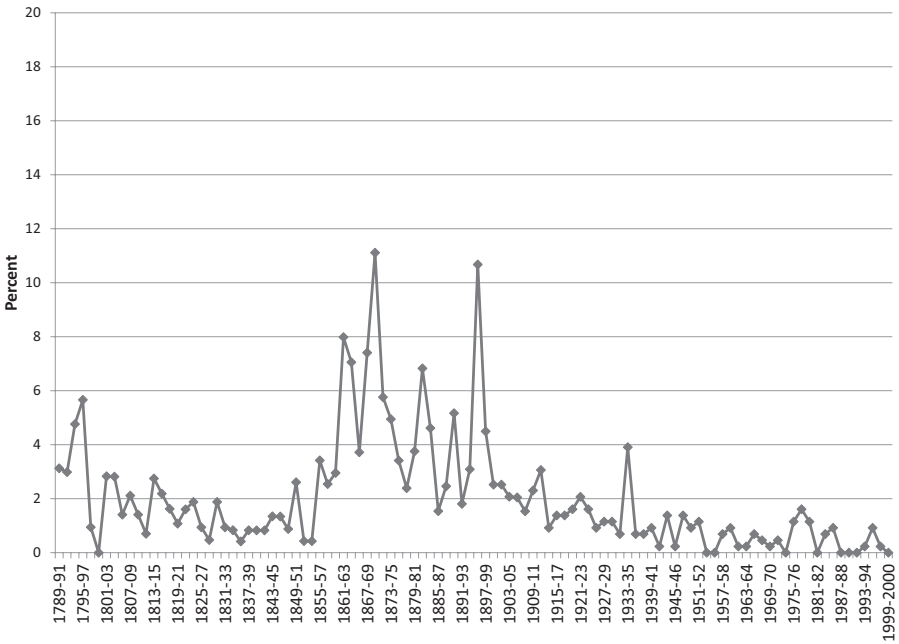

FIGURE 8.4. Contested U.S. Congressional Elections as a Percentage of Total Seats, 1789–2000. *Source:* Data are from Jenkins 2004.

basically ended in the U.K. before the First World War, challenges persisted in the United States right through the Progressive Era and into the early years of the New Deal.

A few vote-buying machines persisted in the United States well into the twentieth century. One was Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish machine, headed by Leander Perez, whereby voters were still in the 1950s and 1960s routinely paid a few dollars for their votes.[7] Even if out-and-out vote buying was anachronistic in the post–World War II period, if the secondary literature is any guide nonprogrammatic distribution persists to this day in the United States. Studies of the United States cited in earlier chapters uncovered biased distribution of federal dollars to states and of state dollars to counties and to state-assembly districts, both for public spending projects (pork) and for targeted benefits (nonconditional benefits to individuals). By contrast, we are aware of only one study that reveals nonprogrammatic distribution in the U.K., in the allocation of government grants to local authorities.[8] Even this study does not point toward consistent or glaring use of such strategies.

[7] Jeansonne 1977.
[8] See John and Ward 2001.

With only two national cases to compare, we cannot definitively adjudicate among several plausible explanations for the quicker and more definitive demise of British clientelism. It may be linked to differences in the nature of electorates of the two countries. Nineteenth-century America featured immigrants who lived in ethnically distinctive urban communities, had considerable unmet economic and social needs, and were rapidly incorporated into the electorate. Urban machines flourished in immigrant communities. However, we – like some contemporary observers in the United States – are also struck by sharp differences in the two countries' institutional settings. The demise of electoral corruption was hastened in Britain, as we shall see, by effective anticorruption legislation. The career of this sort of legislation in the United States was uneven. The federal structure of the American government and the rise of powerful statewide party organizations were barriers to antimachine reforms. State parties channeled substantial financial resources into campaigns, whereas campaigns were largely self-financed by candidates in the U.K., giving politicians an incentive to pursue reforms that would limit expenditures on electoral agents. American statewide parties also coordinated many campaigns at several levels of government, both primary and general elections, many of them beyond the jurisdiction of Congress. With resistance from machine bosses and, in some cases, from the courts, the U.S. Congress could not at a blow kill vote buying by placing tight regulations on campaign spending. In 1883, the British House of Commons did exactly that.

That said, the same intra-party dynamics drove electoral reform in the two industrializing countries. Party leaders – Tories and Liberals, Democrats and Republicans – saw a common interest in attacking their own election agents and machines. About the U.S. states' late nineteenth-century adoption of the government-produced or "official" ballot, Reynolds wrote, "Assisted by the reformers, the Democratic and Republican leadership used the official ballot to wrest control over the election from the hands of machine operatives."[9] Ballot reform, like other anticorruption measures, was not simply a byproduct of Mugwump and progressive reformers, as is commonly supposed. Reformers could not have succeeded had they not entered into an implicit alliance with party leaders. Leaders were centrally driven by a desire to eliminate the "treachery" regularly committed against them by local machines.

> To the reformers the machine meant venality, corruption, and bribery; its unprincipled minions controlled the machinery of elections, demanded and misspent great sums of cash, and stood in the way of honest balloting. *To the partisan leaders the local machine*

[9] Reynolds 1988, p. 49. Pressure for civil-service reform in late nineteenth-century America also emanated in part from party leaders, including presidents, who viewed reform as promising "to rebuild the autonomy and prestige of their offices"(Skowronek 1982, p. 55). Skowronek also noted, however, that presidents and other party leaders who claimed to oppose patronage sometimes were simply in an internal power struggle to control it.

was a source of insubordination and untrustworthiness – an increasingly expensive and unwieldy instrument for carrying out the will of the true party organization.[10]

Intra-party conflict between leaders and brokers also drove reform in Britain. Conservative and Liberal leaders were aligned in their hostility toward their electoral intermediaries. As O'Leary explained, the "desire to wipe out the tribe of electioneering parasites . . . proved to be a common goal transcending party differences," which explains the "surprising degree of accord between the leaders of the [Liberal and Conservative] parties during the debates between 1880 and 1883."[11]

Although party leaders in both countries came to view themselves as better off without brokers, any individual's use of bribery to win elections could stymie legislative action.[12] The historian Charles Seymour captured well the collective desire to eliminate vote buying and how it could be quashed by individual Members of Parliament's incentives to defect. In the early decades after the Great Reform Act of 1832, MPs viewed themselves as in peril of losing office should they support the reforms needed to end electoral bribery.

> The average member [of the House of Commons] might really prefer a free election; bribery meant expense, and it meant that the skill of the election agent was trusted as more efficacious than the candidate's native powers, an admission that few members liked to make. But there was always a modicum of candidates who preferred to insure their seats by a liberal scattering of gold; in self-protection the others must place themselves in the hands of their agents, thus tacitly accepting, if not approving, corrupt work.[13]

In Britain, after changes wrought by industrialization had eroded the electoral benefits from a "liberal scattering of gold," these obstacles were more easily overcome.

In the United States, legislators had to clear these obstacles to collective action many times over, in the 48 states. States adopted reforms, rejected them, and saw them tested by state and federal judges. Congress tried to regulate elections of their members and sometimes found themselves thwarted by internal dissent or by the courts. Although these complex processes ran their course, in the meantime, state and national political committees became coordinators of myriad campaigns and funnels for money that ran from the trust – banks, insurance companies, manufacturers, corporations – to statewide parties and to city machines.

Many American political leaders took inspiration from the British Anti-Corrupt Practices Act of 1883. However, as Sikes explained, the simple solution of limiting candidates' own expenditures was impotent in the American setting:

[10] Reynolds and McCormick 1986, p. 851, emphasis added.
[11] O'Leary 1962, p. 229.
[12] Camp 2010 explains how obstacles to collective action can interfere with brokers' incentives to work for their parties.
[13] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 199.

To control by law a candidate for parliament who personally or by his agent manages his own campaign, and whose canvass is distinct by itself is a comparatively simple matter. To deal with a dozen or more candidates, all running for office at the same time on a party ticket and voted for within the same election district, none of whom may have anything to do with the actual conduct of the campaign, is a task of much greater complexity . . . [14]

That American party committees, not candidates, were responsible for the "actual conduct of campaigns" extended to the financing of campaigns as well. Corporate finance of campaigns was a post–Civil War phenomenon but became regularized and systematic in the late 1890s.[15] British candidates' mistrust of their election agents was especially bitter, given that the funds used for bribing and treating frequently came out of the candidates' own pockets. Given the generous corporate monies available to parties, the incentive for reform was weaker in the United States.

Our explanation for the contrasting pace of the emergence of programmatic politics in these two countries contrasts with Shefter's influential account.[16] Late nineteenth-century Britain, in Shefter's view, represented a case in which an entrenched politics of patronage was avoided. Constituencies for universalism arose within both Liberal and Conservative parties before each took on the task of mobilizing popular electoral support. The United States presents a more complicated panorama. The Western states were like Britain and staved off patronage politics; the Eastern states combined early mass democracy and late constituencies for universalism and hence became persistently patronage-bound.[17] The crux of the difference between Britain and the Eastern United States, in Shefter's account, is the early onset of American mass democracy, and hence American parties' habituation to patronage politics before an effective constituency against it took shape.[18] "One strongly suspects that had universal suffrage been adopted in England prior to the formation of a constituency for

[14] Sikes 1928, p. 125.

[15] See Mayhew 1986 and Mutch 1988.

[16] Shefter 1977, 1994. The explanandum of Shefter's study and ours are not identical. Although his "universalism" is like our programmatic politics, he is focused on the use of public employment as an electoral tool, whereas our focus is on clientelism and vote buying, of which patronage may be a sub-category. It is tempting to try to rectify the two accounts by pointing out that civil service positions in Britain were coveted by aristocratic and bourgeoise families, so that it is natural to consider a "constituency for universalism" centrally involving Oxbridge-educated men of the landed and mercantile classes. In contrast, our more central focus on flows of smaller benefits and assistance would naturally entail struggles among party actors trying to entice middling and low-income voters.

[17] Mayhew 1986 offered a more nuanced geography of patronage-prone states, or ones in which the parties maintain "traditional party organizations." These include northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, but also several midwestern ones.

[18] Or, more precisely, American parties in the East.

bureaucratic autonomy the outcome of the struggle between the practitioners and opponents of patronage politics would have been quite different. In that event Britain would have recapitulated the experience of the United States during the Jacksonian Era."[19]

The vigor with which British parties used treats, bribes, and other nonuniversalist inducements to boost their vote tallies, going back – as we shall see – at least to the Great Reform Act of 1832, leads us to doubt Shefter's account. Well before universal suffrage, Liberal and Conservative candidates and their agents were accustomed to competing by using particularistic blandishments. The coalition that developed against patronage and electoral bribery in Britain and the United States was comprised not of bureaucrats and the educated middle classes who favored meritocracy so much as between reformists and party leaders, the latter chafing under their own machines. Their motivation was not to preserve the civil service for their elite-educated sons but to circumvent unreliable brokers. If there was a critical moment at which the two countries' experiences diverged, it was with the American party leaders' failure to institutionalize universalism before the parties became too complex, the campaigns they ran too multicandidate and multilevel, and before campaign funding became too plentiful to be easily controlled by reformers. Yet these "failures" were in a sense constitutional, reflecting a highly federalized system of government, independent state parties, and a central government hemmed in both by state governments and by the courts.

8.2 BRITAIN

Reviewing the historiography about Victorian politics in Britain, it is hard not to be struck by the very deep tensions that frequently afflicted the relationship between leaders and brokers. These conflicts are rendered vividly in the period's political fiction. The rapacious and unreliable electoral agent was a frequent figure in the Victorian novel. Some of the darkest accounts come from writers with personal experiences as candidates. Anthony Trollope drew on his experience as a Liberal candidate for the corrupt district of Beverly in 1868 for his 1871 political novel *Ralph the Heir*. And Trollope's character George Vavasor, in his 1865 novel *Can You Forgive Her*, was bled to the point of bankruptcy by his electoral agent.

Why did clientelism as practiced by these fictional agents and their flesh-and-blood counterparts not survive to the end of the Victorian era? In what follows, we first discuss the rise and decline of electoral corruption in nineteenth-century Britain, with its notable drop-off in the last two decades of the century. On average, 67 formal charges of electoral corruption followed each election that took place between 1832 through 1880. Between 1885 and 1900, the average fell to nine. We then explore the conditions that encouraged this decline. These

[19] Shefter 1977, p. 441.

include the growth and (eventually) growing affluence of the electorate, as well as the increasing opacity of electoral choices and politicians' easier access to mass communications at the end of the century. These shifts changed the calculations of politicians, who for many decades had chafed under the burden of their brokers and electoral agents. Political leaders later passed legislation – some of it measures that had been proposed earlier but failed – that further increased the opacity of the vote, regulated levels of campaign spending, and drove up the risks and costs for candidates who were caught, or whose agents were caught, buying votes.

Our focus on industrialization as the unmoved mover of political change echoes earlier accounts of nineteenth-century democratization and of the crystallization of party voting in the British electorate.[20] Our topic is not entirely unrelated to these, though here democratization lies not in the expansion of the franchise but in its increasingly free exercise. Also, our concern is less with the rise of parties than with a profound shift in their manner of eliciting voters' support. Yet rather than gesturing toward social pressure from below as the link between industrialization and democratization, or noting the inefficiency of private members' bills in a dynamic, industrializing economy, our account shifts the focus to intraparty conflict. Industrial-era changes eventually resolved this conflict against electoral agents and in favor of programmatic politics.

8.2.1 The Timing of the Decline of Clientelism in Britain

> It is inevitable that the voters should be influenced in some manner or other. The flexibility of political influence is well known; at one time it is embodied in patent, flagrant, and unashamed corruption; under different conditions it becomes insidious and impalpable. In earlier days a constituency was purchased like a church living or an army commission. It was the property of the buyer . . . Such customs fell into disuse with the passage of time, and individual voters were bought with money or presents. Then instead of purchasing individuals the candidate bought whole communities, by entertainments and picnics. The step between this stage and that in which classes and trades are won by promises of legislation is not very broad.
>
> – Charles Seymour, Electoral Reform in England and Wales[21]

To work out the timing of Seymour's sequence from individual vote buying and treating to electoral promises made to "classes and trades," it is helpful look to the frequency of reports of bribery and petitions and to the prominence of party manifestos and campaign statements.

In the late eighteenth century, the out-and-out purchasing of votes, commonly referred to in Britain as electoral bribery, was relatively less important

[20] Acemoglu and Robinson 2006 also connected the expansion of the franchise in nineteenth-century Britain to industrialization, but their explanation underscores the creation of popular pressure and social movements. Cox 1987 explained the emergence of the cabinet and parties as the end result of industrial growth.

[21] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 453.

than was the "insidious and impalpable" influence on electoral choices exercised by landowners, notables, and employers over people who depended on them.[22] In the views of contemporaries, the Great Reform Act of 1832 encouraged a shift from influence to bribery. Viscount Palmerston lamented in 1839 that "the extent to which bribery and corruption was carried at the last election, has exceeded anything that has ever been stated within these walls." Seymour concurs:

> Before 1832 the great lords had, with few exceptions, complete control of the small boroughs . . . But after the Reform Act the patrons lost their control to a large extent and must strain every nerve to influence the election; where they had before commanded, now they must buy. The close boroughs had been opened and instead of a corrupt corporation there was a numerous electorate, composed often of persons whose circumstances laid them open to temptation.[23]

The reform made it "necessary for the ambitious rich who desired to buy seats in parliament to purchase, not the borough itself, but the voters."[24]

Note the allusion here to the short-run effect of the expanded franchise: it drove down the median income of the electorate. Newly expanded to include leaseholders in the counties, this more "numerous electorate" was now – in contrast to before the reform – composed of a greater number of "persons whose circumstances laid them open to temptation." Franchise-expanding reforms, then, made vote buying a more attractive strategy; only long-run economic development would improve the material conditions of the electorate and drive down the numbers of voters for whom the treat or access to poor relief was worth the sale of his vote.

The heyday of "patent, flagrant, and unashamed" electoral corruption was the half century after the Great Reform Act of 1832. The Great Reform Act's extension of the franchise and retention of the rights of freemen gave candidates and their agents the incentive and additional means to manipulate the vote. The 1832 reform also established electoral registries for the first time. In its wake, registration societies appeared throughout the land. Lawyers attached to these societies helped register voters and also specialized in the competitive effort to strike voters from the lists. These lawyers were the precursors to electoral agents, the registration societies the precursors to the Liberal and Conservative party associations.[25]

There is broad agreement that vote buying became widespread after 1832 and declined sharply in the late 1880s. During the remaining years of the nineteenth century, and with the dawn of the twentieth century, accusations of vote buying fell to a trickle. Figures 8.1 and 8.2 suggest a structural shift

[22] O'Gorman 1989.

[23] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 170. For more recent accounts of the Great Reform Act see Smith 2004, and Salmon 2003. Scott 1969 outlines a similar sequence, though in more abstract terms, from votes that were commanded to votes that had to be purchased.

[24] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 196. Orr's (2006) assessment is similar.

[25] See the discussion in O'Leary 1962, p. 16 and passim.

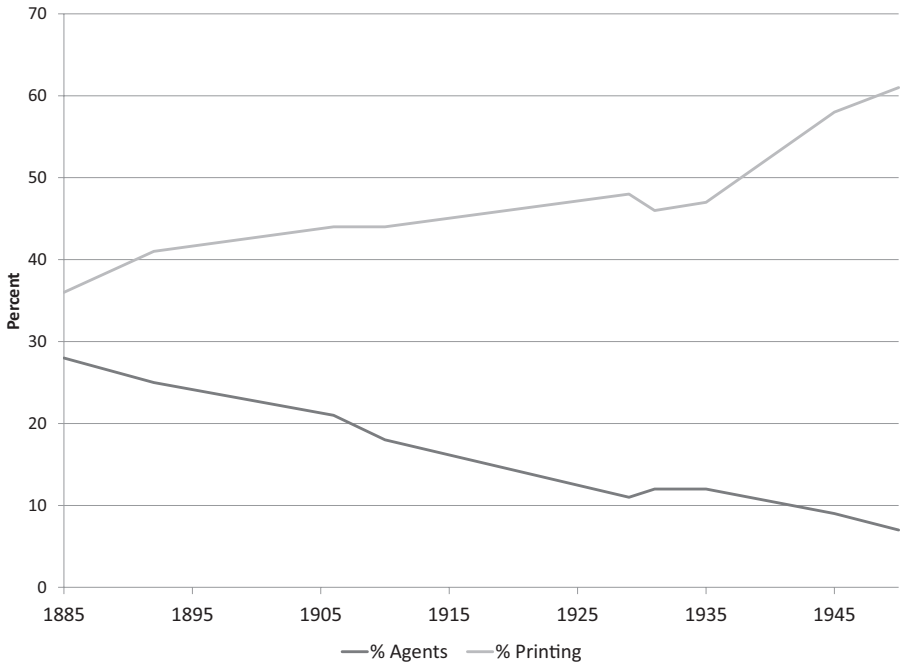

FIGURE 8.5. Trends in British Campaign Spending on Agents and Printing, 1885–1960. *Source:* Data are from Craig 1989.

in the late 1880s, from relatively high (though varying) to fairly insignificant numbers of accusations thereafter. A 1906 petition accusing a candidate of bribery and the subsequent appointment of a royal investigatory commission provoked much discussion; two generations earlier, such accusations had been routine.[26] In 1911, the election court heard petitions of alleged corruption in an Irish constituency. Other such cases followed, very intermittently, in subsequent decades. When a case came before election judges in 2010, many educated Britons were unaware of the court's existence.[27]

If the decline in accusations of bribery reflected a real shift away from broker-mediated distribution and toward programmatic politics, we would expect to find changes in the composition of campaign expenditures in the late nineteenth century, away from agents and toward direct communications by leaders. Indeed, campaigners' official reports, compiled by Craig, show a secular shift, beginning in the 1880s (see Figure 8.5).[28] The electoral agent received

[26] Seymour 1970[1915], pp. 448–450.

[27] During the 2010 general election campaign, the Labour Party candidate from Oldham East and Saddleworth accused his Liberal Democratic rival of taking illegal foreign donations and being sponsored by "extremists." The Labour candidate won the election. The Liberal Democrat brought a petition to the election court, claiming that his opponent had made false statements about him; the court ordered a new election. In this case, the allegation was not of bribery but of libel.

[28] Craig 1989.

ever-smaller shares. Expenditures on agents fell from nearly 30 percent in 1885 to less than 10 percent a half-century later. Expenditures on printing rose steadily, by World War II amounting to £6 of every £10 spent.

Well before World War II, in the final decades of the Victorian era, electioneering increasingly involved public pronouncements of campaign pledges, reported through a much-enlarged printed press. William Gladstone's later career embodies both trends. His "chief electoral device" became in the late 1870s "the active mobilization of public opinion behind a clearly articulated set of proposals"[29] – articulated, what's more, in the setting of the mass rally and in the context of a burgeoning newspaper culture. Gladstone's soaring speeches in the 1879 Midlothian campaign had as an intended audience not just the many people who were physically present but also reporters from news agencies such as the *Exchange Telegraph*. With little interest in party bureaucracies, indeed aloof even from his parliamentary party, Gladstone "depended upon words – and increasingly upon words reported in the press – to achieve high political visibility."[30]

By the 1880s, party leaders understood the increasing power of direct communications with voters and the shrinking space for the treat or the bribe. In the debates leading to the passage of the crucial 1883 Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, some Conservative back-benchers objected to the bill's proposed campaign spending limits. The Tory leader John Gorst countered that expenditures need not be high: "All that was really required was that the constituencies should have the means of amply being informed, or informing themselves, of the character, qualifications and political views of the candidates."[31]

8.2.2 Industrialization and the Decline of Clientelism in Britain

"By the second quarter of the nineteenth century Britain had become the home of the first urban industrialized economy in the modern world" writes Hoppen. Although he and other historians of this period have found economic growth rates less impressive, on revision, than the term "industrial revolution" might suggest, still the change was revolutionary in that its "effects were sustained."[32] Industrialization in Britain set off a series of crucial transformations in the electorate. The electorate became more numerous. Industrialization made British society and, in a less linear way, the British electorate, wealthier. The electorate became more urban and hence more anonymous. Industrialization made Britain a society in which ambitious politicians could communicate directly with mass constituencies. All of these changes eroded the effectiveness of the electoral agent, with his treat and his bribe. Ultimately, a larger and

[29] Hoppen 2000, p. 592.
[30] Hoppen 2000, p. 633, see also Jenkins 2002.
[31] Hansard April 27, 1882, cclxviii, cited in O'Leary 1962, p. 165.
[32] Hoppen 2000, p. 276.

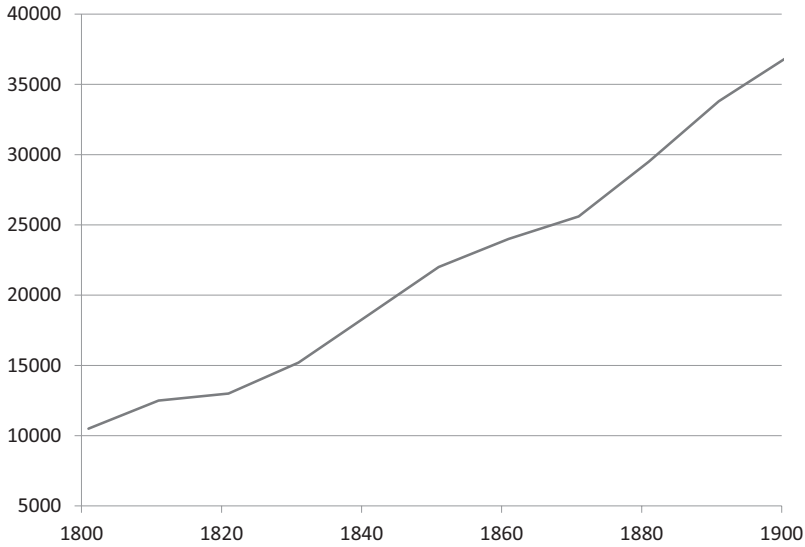

FIGURE 8.6. Population of Britain, 1800–1900 (1,000s). *Source:* Data are from Jeffries 2005.

more urban electorate and one populated by relatively fewer poor people made bribery less attractive to office seekers than were programmatic appeals.

A Larger Electorate

Contrary to Malthusian predictions, Britain in the nineteenth century experienced, simultaneously, considerable economic growth and considerable population growth. The population rose from about 8 million in 1801 to more than 30 million a century later (see Figure 8.6).[33] In part simply as a reflection of population growth, the size of the electorate in Victorian Britain exploded (see Figure 8.7). However, this mechanical effect was overshadowed by political change: successive new categories of men were given the right to vote. Extensions of the franchise meant that growth of the electorate outpaced that of the broader population. Although the population grew by a factor of three, the electorate grew by a factor of nine: from 435,000 in 1830 to 4.4 million in 1888. Much of this growth came in spurts around the electoral reforms. The electorate was 49 percent larger in 1833 than in 1831, an increase due almost entirely to the Great Reform Act of 1832. It grew by 88 percent in the years surrounding the Reform Act of 1867, by 67 percent in the years surrounding the 1883 reform.[34] Both population growth and pressure to expand the franchise were traceable, in part, to industrialization.

[33] Population statistics are from Jeffries 2005.
[34] Seymour 1970[1915], Appendix 1, p. 533.

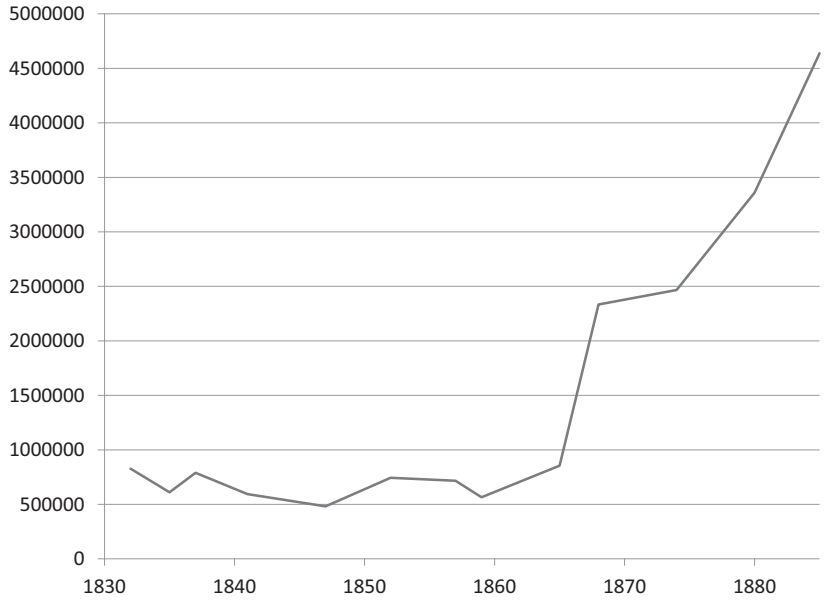

FIGURE 8.7. Votes Cast in British Parliamentary Elections, 1832–1923. *Source:* Data are from Craig 1989.

Just as important as a more numerous total electorate was the larger size of constituencies. The reform of 1832 took representation in Westminster away from many small, rotten, and pocket boroughs and redistributed their seats to larger boroughs such as in the Midlands, Lancashire, and Yorkshire, which, with the growth of industry, had gained in importance, though not to that point in political representation. The redistribution (what Americans would call "redistricting") of 1867–1868 under Disraeli entirely disenfranchised seven towns with populations of less than 5,000 and shifted 35 seats away from towns with populations of less than 10,000. The redistribution of 1885 under Gladstone increased the number of seats in the industrial centers of Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham, and Liverpool. Figure 8.8 displays the average number of votes cast per member of parliament. The figure reveals a strong upward trend, beginning in the 1870s.

Several authors have drawn connections between the size of the electorate as a whole, the size of borough constituencies (especially in the industrializing north), and the decline of bribery and patronage. Indeed, a central justification for reforming the constituencies was that larger districts would undercut corrupt practices. Recent studies as well attribute cleaner elections in late compared with early Victorian Britain to the larger constituencies. In the era of mass constituencies, O'Leary contended, "the cost of electioneering on the old lines would be quite prohibitive" – the old lines being through electoral agents

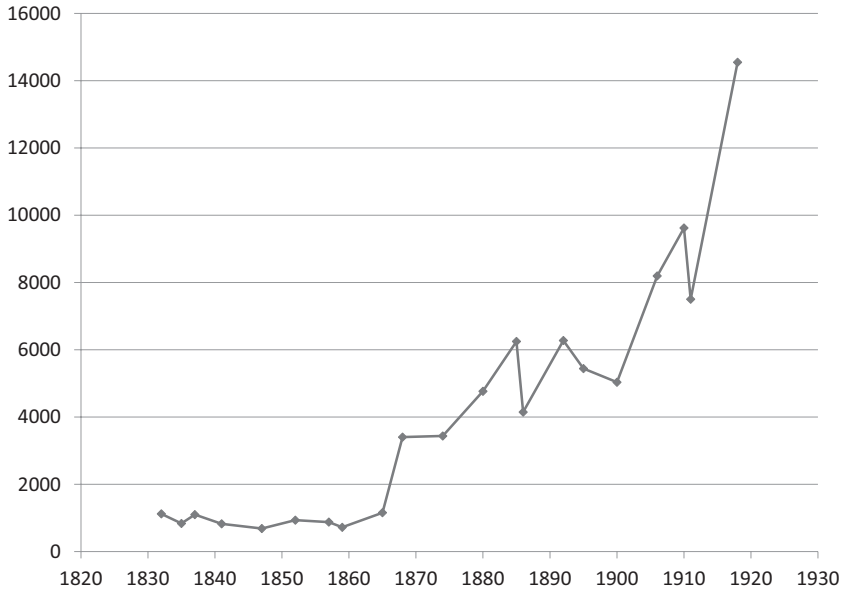

FIGURE 8.8. Votes Cast per Member of the House of Commons, 1832–1918. *Source:* Data are from Craig 1989.

who engaged in treating, bribing, and intimidation.[35] Regarding patronage, O'Gorman wrote:

[E]ven before 1832 the number of electors was already so great as to render patronage in many constituencies of little consequence. Perhaps in the closed boroughs . . . patronage might have been an effective instrument of political control, but even in these places it was far from being an adequate and reliable method of controlling a parliamentary constituency.[36]

Cox also noted the reduced attractiveness of electoral bribery in larger constituencies:

Certainly a fixed amount of money would buy a smaller proportion of total votes in larger towns if the average price of votes was not less. Even if the price of votes was less (in proportion to the greater number of voters) . . . the costs of arranging to bribe many more electors, not to mention the increased risk of being caught, made bribery a less attractive electoral option . . . In contrast, a given policy promise – to disestablish the Irish church, for example – would almost certainly appeal to a larger number of voters in larger towns and may have appealed to a larger proportion. One suspects therefore that candidates in the larger and more independent boroughs engaged in the politics

[35] O'Leary 1962, p. 231.
[36] O'Gorman 2001, p. 67.

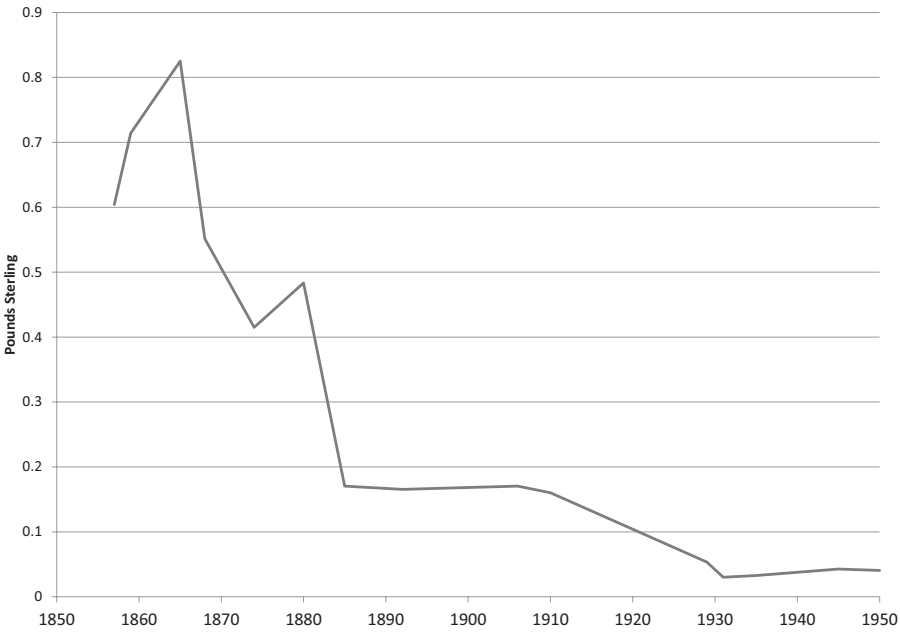

FIGURE 8.9. Campaign Expenditures per Voter in Britain, 1857–1959. *Source:* Data are from Craig 1989.

of opinion more thoroughly than their colleagues in the smaller towns because it made more electoral sense to do so.[37]

These are astute interpretations and they arrive at the right basic conclusion: larger constituencies made patronage and vote buying less attractive. What Cox in particular hinted at, without quite enunciating, is that as constituencies grew, the unit cost of votes declined, when elicited through programmatic appeals. In contrast – as we have suggested – the monitoring and delivery roles that must be carried out by brokers, and hence the party's dense organizational structure, meant that economies of scale are basically absent in clientelist politics. Not just "arranging to bribe" but holding the bribe's recipient to account was a costly matter, one that was labor-intensive, requiring close and continuous contact between large numbers of electoral agents and individual voters. When the national electorate and local constituencies grew, party programs and print appeals became well worth the investment they required.

If these arguments are correct, as parties shifted from clientelism to programmatic strategies, we should observe a fall in the per-vote cost of campaigning. And indeed a sharp decline did occur in Britain. Figure 8.9 displays the total amounts spent by candidates, divided by the number of votes cast, across all

[37] Cox 1987, p. 57.

elections in which candidates reported expenditures and in which most constituencies were contested.[38] Beginning in 1857, candidates were required to make detailed reports of campaign spending to election auditors. Because of unreported expenditures on bribery, the figures for 1857–1885 understate the levels of spending; the downward trend in reality would have been even steeper than it appears in the figure. The Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883 imposed spending limits and tightened reporting procedures. Therefore, the figures beginning with the 1885 election are more reliable.

Figure 8.9 reveals a marked decline in campaign expenditures per vote cast. Expenditures in 1900 were about one-quarter, on a per-vote basis, of what they had been at their peak in the mid-nineteenth century.

Certainly machine politics survives in very large electorates. Rather than automatically ending clientelist strategies, increasingly populous electorates are one factor that tends to drive up the relative implicit price of votes acquired through bribery and hence to make programmatic politics more attractive.

A Wealthier Electorate

Chapter 6 showed evidence that poor countries are prone to clientelism and that poor people are prone to be clients. We noted that poor people are likely to be driven to "vote for" immediate benefits, like a bag of food or some cash, whereas wealthier people are more willing to cast expressive votes in favor of their preferred candidates, parties, or programs. We now turn to evidence that the British electorate eventually became wealthier and hence less "open to temptation."

The poverty, unemployment, and squalor of the "slums" (a term first used in this sense in the 1840s) conveyed by Charles Dickens, and the penury suffered by dislocated agricultural workers depicted by Mary Gaskell, were essential features of the Victorian period. Certainly poverty was widespread. Estimates of the percentage of inhabitants whose family earnings at the end of the century were insufficient to meet their basic needs ranged from 27 percent in York to 31 percent in London.[39] Yet notwithstanding rural displacement and urban squalor, Britain became a significantly wealthier society in the nineteenth century. Output increased steadily over the century, though faster in some periods than others. Income distribution was highly unequal: estimates put the Gini index at 49 in 1867. Inequality did not in all respects follow a Kuznets trajectory. It did not increase in the early stages of industrialization, but it did subside in the first decades of the twentieth century.[40] In addition, real wages in

[38] These elections are 1857, 1859, 1865, 1868, 1874, 1880, 1885, 1892, 1906, 1910, 1929, 1931, 1935, 1945, and 1950. Few candidates ran unopposed after 1918, but we include them to follow the spending trend well into the period of programmatic strategies. Candidates who ran unopposed spent almost nothing. Calculations are based on information in Craig 1989.

[39] Hoppen 2000, p. 62.

[40] See Lindert 2000, pp. 173–175. The change should not be overstated: Lindert reports Gini estimates for England and Wales of 59.3 in 1801 and 49.0 in 1867. He shows that income

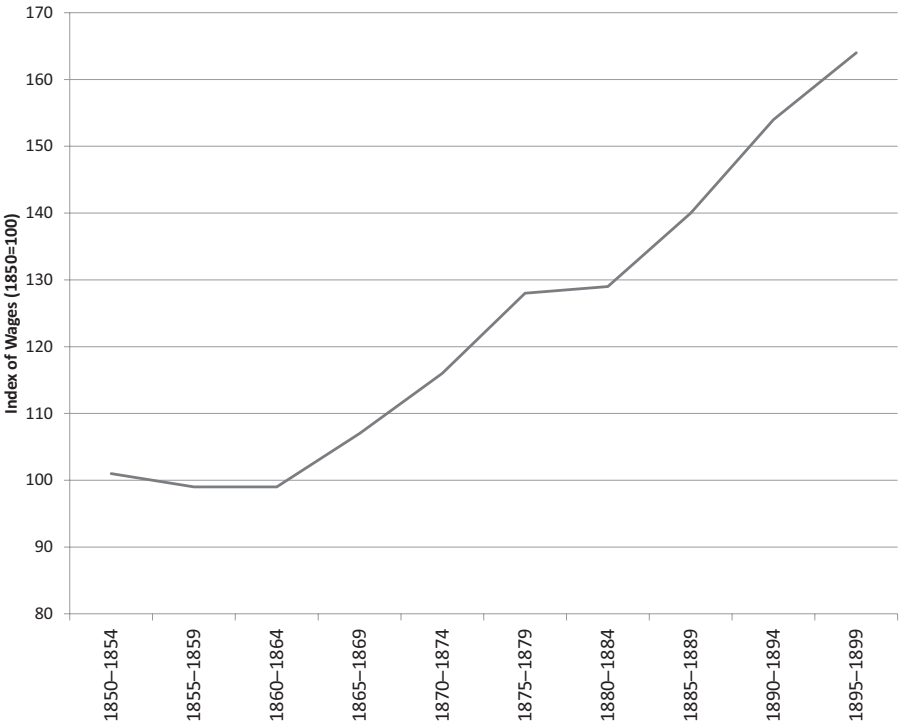

FIGURE 8.10. Real Wages in British Manufacturing, 1850–1899. *Source:* Hoppen 2000.

manufactures grew (see Figure 8.10). A mechanical effect of growing wealth of the general *population* would have been to reduce poverty rates and dependency in the *electorate*.

Economic growth also increased pressure to open the suffrage. Latter nineteenth-century electoral reforms nearly doubled the percentage of the adult male population entitled to vote, from 17 percent in 1861 to 30 percent in 1871, and doubled it again, to 61 percent in 1871, before finally reaching nearly 100 percent in 1918.[41] The short-term effect of suffrage-broadening reforms – in 1867 and 1885, more than in 1832 – was, however, to bring new strata of lower-income voters into the electorate. That the extension of the suffrage to poorer voters might encourage bribery was something that contemporaries warned of. In debates leading to the 1867 reform, which eventually established the household suffrage, nearly all predicted "an increase of electoral

inequality increased again between 1868 and 1911, but declined fairly steadily thereafter, until the 1960s.

[41] Hoppen 2000, p. 653.

corruption as a result of the extension of the franchise to the classes most open to temptation."[42]

The complexities of the evolving Victorian suffrage, and the shortcomings of statistics on poverty and incomes in the period, make precise estimates of the income structure of the electorate over time treacherous. It's difficult to know with precision at what point rising incomes in the population would have outpaced the reductions in average income of the electorate that resulted from successive expansions of the suffrage to the lower strata. We might stipulate that the short-term effect of expansions of the franchise in 1867 and in 1883 was to depress median incomes in the electorate faster than the offsetting rise in incomes in the general population boosted them. Still, the upward trend in the median income of the electorate would have become more pronounced than the downward one as the unenfranchised segment of the population became a smaller fraction of the whole. With universal suffrage – established in 1918[43] – income levels of the electorate came basically to reflect the income structure of the population. Even by the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the dominant trend was probably one of voting populations who were increasingly economically secure.

Changes in the structure of incomes in the twentieth century may help explain why the shift away from vote buying became permanent. From the end of the Great War until 1970, Britain experienced a sustained (and well-documented) shift toward greater equality of income distribution.[44] It also became an affluent country. Hence, as a long-run effect of changes that began in the latter Victorian era, a more prosperous electorate made vote buying a less tempting strategy for office seekers.

A Less Discernible Vote

In the first decades after the 1832 reform, small borough and county constituencies were places where electoral agents could closely monitor the actions of voters. The party association sent the agent out:

> through the boroughs to discover the private circumstances of the voter and make use of any embarrassment as a club to influence votes. [Agents carried ledgers with] a space for special circumstances which might give an opportunity for political blackmail, such as debts, mortgages, need of money in trade, commercial relations, and even the most private domestic matters.[45]

As population flowed away from villages and small towns and into the larger manufacturing areas, fine-grained surveillance of voters became harder to carry out.

[42] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 277.
[43] Women were also enfranchised in 1918, but were subjected to property qualifications until 1928.
[44] Lindert 2000.
[45] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 184.

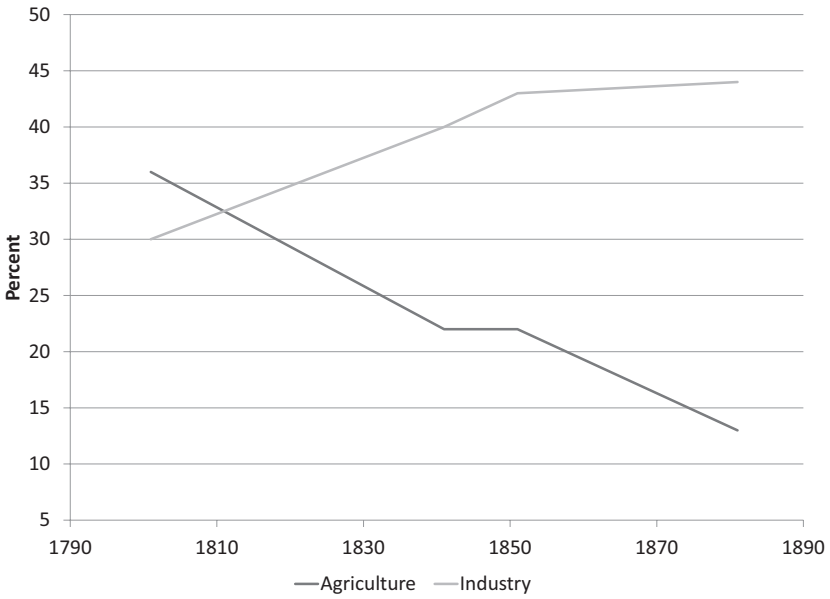

FIGURE 8.11. Proportions of British Labor Force in Agriculture and Industry, 1800–1880. *Source:* Data from Hoppen 2000.

Over the century, an ever-larger segment of the British population came to live in large towns and cities. Lying behind this population movement was a sharp change in the composition of the labor force, from agriculture to industry (see Figure 8.11). In 1801, towns with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants accounted for more than two-thirds of the population; in 1891 they accounted for only one-quarter. Some of this population movement was away from county constituencies and toward middle-size or large urban boroughs, such as Manchester or London.

In the larger town and city boroughs where newly enfranchised artisans and working- and middle-class men arrived, embarrassment and blackmail were less feasible. The very act of moving also gave voters greater anonymity, making their electoral actions and preferences less easily discovered.

These demographic changes undoubtedly caused difficulties for party agents who needed to identify vulnerable voters and deliver benefits and treats to them. However, the most important change in this regard was not an exogenous social transformation but a reform very much fashioned by politicians: the 1872 introduction of the written ballot. In the United States, ballot reform was a multistaged process, and written ballots were in use long before secrecy was achieved. Britain, by contrast, leapt all at once from recording votes openly in poll books to the Australian ballot, which dissociated parties from the production and distribution of ballots at the same time that it promoted electoral

secrecy. Later in this chapter we discuss the circumstances leading to this dramatic change, which quite intentionally, and with one blow, made the votes of individuals much harder to discern.

The ballot complicated but did not eliminate electoral bribery. There is some evidence of a post-ballot disarticulation of the market for votes. The price of votes fell after the introduction of the ballot, in one documented case from £5 to 5 shillings.[46] The ballot meant that the candidate's agent was buying not a vote but some probability of a vote, a commodity of lesser value. Voters began accepting bribes from multiple competing candidates. The fall in the price of a vote and voters' inability to commit to a single buyer signaled a partial unraveling of the market for votes. But the unraveling was only partial. Voters were still seen as susceptible to pressure: "by demanding pledges, the agent was often able to exert as strong influence as in the days of open voting."[47] And claims of electoral corruption persisted.

Declining Costs of Mass Communication

Political aspirants' use of print media to publicly announce their policy proposals had a long history in England and in Britain. In the seventeenth century, the preferred medium was the author-produced pamphlet or broadside. The use of the term "manifesto" to describe these pamphlets has been traced to the 1640s,[48] and electioneering via printed platforms occurred as early as 1679. With the emergence of a party system in the early eighteenth century, the Whigs and Tories regularly set out their positions in printed manifestos.[49] The public sphere was, then, vigorous well before the nineteenth century.[50]

What evolved in the nineteenth century were newspapers: printed texts appearing on a regular basis and for a mass audience, containing information about current events as well as political opinions and party propaganda. The newspaper replaced the broadside and pamphlet as the key medium defining the public sphere. Newspaper circulation doubled between 1801 and 1839, from 16 million stamps a year to 29 million.[51] The supply of newspapers also exploded, from 266 in 1824 to more than 2 million in 1886, the sharpest rise taking place between the 1860s and the turn of the century.[52]

The explosion of relatively inexpensive printed newspapers, and their penetration into ever-broader strata of ever-more-literate British society, meant

[46] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 435.
[47] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 433.
[48] Peacey 2004.
[49] Knights 1994.
[50] Pincus 2006.
[51] Christie 1970, cited in O'Gorman 2001, p. 75.
[52] Vincent 1966, cited in Cox 1987, p. 13. The greater ease of direct communication with voters afforded by the growing saturation of newspapers was not entirely unrelated to the actions of government (hence we call this a "mainly exogenous" factor), because the reduction in the regulated price of stamps and of paper contributed to this change.

that aspirants for office could communicate programmatic appeals to their constituents with little difficulty.

Inexpensive newspapers and growing literacy also changed the electorate in ways that made vote buying less effective. Party leaders were aware of these changes, perceiving in the 1880s that "the epoch of aristocratic, and even of middle class, influence was passing rapidly and that the new mass electorate, through increased education and a cheap press, would become politically free and independent in a sense that their predecessors would not have thought possible."[53]

These developments were not disconnected from growing dominance of the political party over individual members, a trend traced by several authors. In explaining this change, Cox focused on the growing importance of the cabinet in control of policy. When the outcome that mattered most to voters was which party controlled the cabinet, rather than the personal identity of a constituent's local member, voting strategies shifted toward parties.[54] Yet Cox's explanation shares with our own the sense that industrialization was a prime mover of these processes: it made private bills inefficient, rendered vote buying too costly, and shifted the demographic traits of the electorate in ways that left it less easily bribed.

8.2.3 Parliamentary Reforms in Context

A common answer to the question, What killed vote buying in Britain? is that legislative reformism did.[55] Proponents of this view rarely ask, however, *why* party leaders in Parliament were willing to undertake reforms when their parties had relied on vote buying for decades. They also do not explain why reforms that had been debated earlier in the century were only successfully passed in its closing decades.

Legislative-reform explanations for the decline of electoral bribery focus on a series of legislative acts to which we have alluded: the Corrupt Practices Act of 1854, which clarified legal definitions of bribery and established a system of auditors to monitor spending; the reform act of 1867, which judicialized the petition process; the 1872 introduction of the ballot; and the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883. Without doubt, the cumulative impact of these acts was to help end vote buying in Britain. Our claim, however, is that the acts would not have passed had structural, or if you will exogenous, changes not made them palatable to party leaders and to members of parliament. Members had always despised their electoral agents and been embarrassed by bribery.

[53] O'Leary 1962, p. 231.

[54] Cox 1987.

[55] However, *which* reform mattered most varies from author to author. Eggers and Spirling 2011 pointed to the 1868 judicialization of petitions claiming election fraud, Seymour 1915 and O'Leary 1962 to the 1883 anticorruption act, and Kam 2009 to the 1885 shift to single-member districts.

But they found the courage of their convictions only when they saw clear ways to undermine the agent without losing their own posts or placing their party at a disadvantage.

If not industrialization and changes in the electorate, what else might account for the timing of reforms and their role in reducing clientelism? One might imagine that parliament was fully committed to reform from early in the century but had to go through a trial-and-error process before it finally lit onto effective measures. Another alternative might be that members became persuaded, through deliberative processes, to support reforms that they had earlier rejected. Not political self-interest but principled beliefs stood in the way of effective reforms. A late-century shift in beliefs about how voters should vote and how candidates should campaign might have been a necessary condition for effective reforms, reforms that, once undertaken, eliminated bribery.

That effective antibribery legislation had to await institutional innovation does not square with the record. Instead, either the same measures had been circulating for decades before they were adopted (as in the ballot), or weak versions of measures were adopted where it was fairly clear that stronger medicine was required.

The crude buying of votes had long been a crime in English common law, and the first antitreating law was enacted in 1696.[56] In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, electoral bribery was perennially the stuff of scandal. The Corrupt Practices Act of 1854 for the first time defined in detail which practices constituted electoral corruption. Later reforms would build on this more explicit set of definitions. Yet in assessing reforms adopted before 1867, Seymour found that "all of the changes suggested were slight and none succeeded in winning the acceptance of both Houses."[57] One description of the pre-1865 cause of franchise reform could well be applied to the overlapping cause of anticorruption reform: "though it generated sporadic bouts of ill-coordinated activity," it "came to resemble nothing so much as a corpse on a dissecting table."[58] Not until industrialization had transformed the electorate in the ways detailed earlier were party leaders able to collude against their own electoral agents and put a stop to it.

A more significant act was the reform of 1867. It shifted jurisdiction over trials for electoral bribery from Parliament to High Court judges. Since the seventeenth century, claimants – mostly losing candidates – could petition parliament to overturn the results of elections that they alleged were corrupt.[59]

[56] O'Leary 1962, p. 11.
[57] Seymour 1970[1915], p. 202.
[58] Hoppen 2000, p. 237.
[59] In addition to shifting jurisdiction over these cases to judges, the 1867 reform moved the trials from London to the district in which corruption was claimed. Boroughs that investigatory commissions found to be incurably corrupt lost their privilege of representation altogether. Totnes, Reigate, Lancaster, and Yarmouth lost their seats in 1867, Beverly and Bridgewater in 1870; Seymour 1970[1915], pp. 423–424. Not antibribery provisions but the expansion of the

However, the House of Commons was often unwilling to punish one of their own, and cross-party collusion ended many investigations. The agreement to forgo charges for treating was regarded by electoral agents as "an honorable treaty."[60] Partisanship played a part in the petition process: Conservative candidates accused of bribery were somewhat more likely to have their defenses heard by Conservative-chaired committees, Liberals by Liberal-chaired committees, and the partisan identity of the chair influenced the outcome of the case.[61]

The written ballot, seen by supporters as the key to freeing voters from bribery and intimidation, had ardent and eloquent supporters in the House of Commons in the 1830s and 1840s. Beginning in 1838, they proposed the ballot year after year, with growing weariness; not until 1872 did it pass. A not dissimilar story can be told of parliamentary committees that investigated vote buying. The House of Commons first formed such a committee in 1835. The witnesses it summoned were "of the same type as were to appear before similar committees during the next forty years."[62] Yet not until the 1880s did Parliamentary action effectively kill vote buying.

Investigations, commissions, and reforms through mid-century did not eliminate vote buying in Britain. From 1868 to 1884, between one-third and one-half of constituencies experienced bribery.[63] Intimidation was also still widespread. A parliamentary investigation in 1868 uncovered many cases of employers punishing underlings who ignored their instructions to vote for the employer's preferred candidate. In one instance, a mill owner from Ashton-under-Lyne dismissed 40 employees who disobeyed his instructions to vote for the Liberal candidate.[64]

Corruption receded definitively in the wake of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883. Indeed, O'Leary helds that the 1883 act "eliminated" corruption.[65] This late-Victorian reform, as we have seen, imposed strict regulations on the composition and overall levels of campaign spending, barred the use of paid canvassers, and put in place procedures for the investigation and punishment of violations. Thus it became risky for election agents to spend funds illegally on bribes.

franchise was the most important element of the 1867 reform. The Conservative government of Disraeli passed what amounted to a "household franchise": the right to vote for all male heads of household, without qualifications based on length of residency or rates paid.

60 Seymour 1970[1915], p. 189.

61 Eggers and Spirling 2011. These authors identified an asymmetry in partisan bias, however: Conservatives were punished by Liberal committee heads but Liberals MPs were not punished by Conservative heads.

62 O'Leary 1962, p. 19.

63 Hoppen 2000, p. 285, Hanham 1959, p. 263.

64 Hartington Select Committee report, cited in Woodall 1974, p. 469.

65 Rix 2008 is skeptical of the term "elimination." However, she concluded that the 1883 act reduced bribery and continued a trend that would culminate in the early twentieth century.

Hence, if the Reform Act of 1832 ushered in a period of heightened corruption and intimidation, effective anticorruption legislation was delayed for two generations. Parliamentary leaders were well aware that imposing strict controls on spending would be required. However, they were only capable of passing effective legislation when their members believed that alternative electoral strategies had become more effective than clientelism.

The history of the introduction of the written ballot illustrates well that neither novel institutions nor persuasive justification were what delayed effective antibribery reforms. This history also inveighs against the idea that popular pressure was the key to forging more democratic and transparent electoral practices. The ballot was debated for decades but did not come close to passage until late in the Victorian era. The idea of a secret ballot was broadly popular, resonating in particular with workers and "middling sorts" for decades. It had been the second demand of the People's Charter, tightly linked to the Chartists' first demand of "a vote for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime." Yet nineteenth-century parliaments remained remarkably unresponsive to popular movements. The Chartists' petitions were met with parliamentary indifference, if not hostility, and their championing of the written ballot probably hurt its prospects. When, in 1839, Chartists wheeled their first petition – three miles long and containing 1,280,000 signatures – into the House of Commons, the reception was chilly. A motion merely to discuss the petition failed, 235 votes to 46. Many members were disengaged from the debate, including Disraeli, who during the debate "spent his time leisurely eating oranges."[66]

Radical candidates like George Grote of and Mark Philips of Manchester campaigned in 1831 promising to press parliament to introduce the ballot. They were easily elected, Grote with more votes than had ever been cast for a member from London. For a decade Grote advocated eloquently in the House of Commons for the ballot, but gave up and retired from Parliament in 1841. The movement for the ballot languished, only to pass more than a generation later.

When the House of Commons finally passed the ballot in 1872, it did *not* do so because parliamentary leaders were finally won over, in the abstract, to the merits of secret voting. Even forward-thinking Liberals such as John Stuart Mill remained opposed to it on principle. Mill, then a Liberal MP, wrote of the proposed shift to secret voting, "Remove publicity and its checks, then all the mean motive of mankind . . . skulk to the polling-booth under a disguising cloak."[67] Gladstone himself was never more than lukewarm toward secret voting. He preferred instead "the idea of voters as independent gentlemen who strode to the poll with their head high and the courage to declare their

[66] Vallance 2009, p. 379.
[67] Cited in Woodall 1974, p. 468.

choice without fear or favour."[68] After an 1871 Parliamentary speech and vote in favor of the ballot, Gladstone recorded in his diary "Spoke on ballot, and voted in 324-230 with mind satisfied & as to feeling a lingering reluctance."[69] What changed were not Gladstone's convictions but his need for allies. He committed himself to its passage to gain Radical support for his government. In particular, Gladstone garnered the Radicals' support by offering John Bright a place in his cabinet and promising to press for passage of the ballot.

By the time the ballot was introduced, few in the House of Commons seemed willing to fight hard against it. Indeed, it eventually passed with the support of Conservative and Liberal leaders. The sense from the Parliamentary debate is that, despite enduring scruples, party leaders perceived much less at stake in allowing voters to escape being held to account. By 1872, as we have seen, even a former Conservative Principal Agent John Gorst could confidently tell nervous Tory backbenchers that they could win elections simply by informing constituents about their "character, qualifications, and political views."[70] The electorate was well along in a process of transformation that made them less vulnerable to bribery.

Stepping back, industrialization made Britain a wealthier country and a more democratic one. By the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, it was well on its way to being a prosperous country. Certainly large segments of the society remained poor and vulnerable. However, the numbers of voters willing to give up their vote for a day at the public house was shrinking, just as the number who would render their vote in return for cash or access to hospital attention was also in sharp decline. The ease of modern mass communications provided alternative avenues for reaching voters, now with words rather than with treats. In addition, the size of constituencies rendered electoral strategies that required close monitoring of voters' actions inefficient.

Industrializing produced vigorous, even violent, social movements, ones that demanded democratic reform and autonomy for the electors. It was on its way to being a society in which the organized working class found fairly direct representation through its own political party. But on the whole the attack on clientelism was carried out by a more traditional political elite. Radicals militated for universal suffrage, the ballot, and proportionality in representation; Whigs and Tories for redistribution of constituencies and rationalization of the suffrage; Liberal governments drove up the cost of vote buying by making detection easier and penalties harsher; and all agreed – for self-interested reasons, as much as for the public good – to reduce and closely monitor campaign expenditures. Perennial tensions between party leaders and their agents in the constituencies made electoral reform attractive to the former, as long as it did not impose obvious electoral costs.

[68] Jenkins 2002, p. 355.
[69] Cited in Jenkins 2002, p. 356.
[70] See note 30.

8.3 THE UNITED STATES

8.3.1 Timing of the Decline of American Clientelism

The heyday of American clientelism was the second half of the nineteenth century. Its decline began during the Progressive Era, but it persisted, in the form of political machines, entrenched in the cities and amongst immigrant voters, into later decades. Its full demise came only in the second half of the twentieth century.

An exchange of favors for votes was an essential part of nineteenth-century American elections. Bensel offered many examples to support his general contention that, in the mid-nineteenth century United States, "For many men . . . the act of voting was a social transaction in which they handed in a party ticket in return for a shot of whiskey, a pair of boots, or a small amount of money." This remained true during the Gilded Age, the golden era of party politics. Party appeals to voters were economic, sectional, ethnic, and religious. But electoral politics in the Gilded Age also featured vote buying: the exchange of cash, food, alcohol, and other small items for votes. The 1888 election in Newark, New Jersey, cited earlier, in which party operatives gave voters chits redeemable for cash, was not unusual. An 1887 study of New York City politics estimated that one-fifth of voters were bribed. Twenty-five years later, an investigation into bribery in Adams County, Ohio, identified 1,679 voters who acknowledged receiving payments for their votes, 26 percent of the county's voters.[71]

American clientelism was dealt a blow by ballot reform. Between 1889 and 1896, state assemblies introduced the "official" (Australian) ballot. The ballot reduced the effectiveness of the kind of exchange that Bensel described, especially in rural areas and small towns. Because payments to individuals give them a selective incentive to go to the polls, it is not surprising that the Australian ballot was followed by a decline in turnout. In the years between the Civil War and the critical election of 1896, turnout achieved its highest levels in American history. After 1896, it dropped sharply.[72] The decline in turnout was especially pronounced among low-income and rural voters. Single-ticket voting and the stability of electoral choices also fell off sharply in the first decades of the twentieth century. Ballot reform hence is part of the explanation for the turn-of-the-century demise of partisanship. In addition to high turnout rates, the late nineteenth century partisan period was characterized by widespread single-party voting and stability of party vote shares over time in localities. All declined after the turn of the century. The greater difficulty parties faced

[71] The New York Figure is from Ivins 1887, the Ohio figure in Blair 1912; both are cited in Sikes 1928, p. 8.

[72] See Kleppner 1982, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993.

in exchanging money or treats for votes was certainly a crucial cause of the demise of partisanship.[73]

Historians also note the rising importance of party platforms in the late nineteenth century, another sign that vote buying was yielding to electoral strategies that, in Hoppen's phrase, "depended upon words." In New Jersey, for instance, whereas the major parties' manifestos in the 1880s were "brief and opaque," increasingly after 1900 they "articulated a more definite set of policies."[74]

The turn-of-the-century decline of vote buying meant that exchanges of votes for small bribes – cash, a hod of coal, a Thanksgiving turkey – was more a nineteenth than a twentieth century phenomenon. Yet clientelism persisted through the Progressive Era and even into the fledgling period of the welfare state. The currency of twentieth-century clientelism was patronage and biased access to public programs. Its organizational expression was the urban party machine.[75] Voters who received benefits or public-sector jobs were accountable to machines that were deeply networked organizations, their tentacles reaching through ward and precinct captains into working-class neighborhoods, churches, and meeting halls. The machines were named for cities in which they operated, and for the mayors or party leaders who presided over them. On the Democratic side were Tweed of Tammany Hall in Manhattan, Kelly and Nash, and later, Daley in Chicago and Hague in Jersey City. On the Republican side, they were named for McMane, later Durham and Vare, in Philadelphia, Magee in Pittsburgh, Cox in Cincinnati and Sheehan in Buffalo. Beyond these big-city machines were ones in smaller cities, including Perez in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana (a Democrat). Although machines belonged to cities, patronage was equally a phenomenon of national politics and featured interactions of presidents, congressmen, and city bosses.

Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA) embodied a mix of programmatic public spending and clientelism. Roosevelt was both the architect of the New Deal and a product of New York state politics, having served as a state senator and governor. In New York he first opposed and then made accommodations with the Tammany Hall machine. President Roosevelt's minister of relief, Harry Hopkins, tried to keep the WPA from being politicized. To avoid congressional and machine manipulations, Hopkins delineated program boundaries that cross-cut congressional districts and county and city limits.[76] After the Democrats won the 1936 election in a landslide, and after Hopkins moved to become Roosevelt's chief political advisor, the WPA became more politicized. A mix of transparent formulas and electoral

[73] See Converse 1972; see also Burnham 1965, 1974.
[74] Reynolds 1988, p. 94.
[75] Patronage had a long history in American politics, going back to the Jacksonian Era and the "spoils" system and transforming during Reconstruction into a tool of partisan politics. See James 2005.
[76] Erie 1988, p. 132. See also Dorsett 1977.

responsiveness guided the federal government's distribution of WPA funds across states. Wright showed that electoral responsiveness guided state-level distributions, although Wallis showed that need also played a large part.[77] However, once the funds arrived in machine cities, electoral considerations became paramount.[78]

WPA projects doubled the number of public-sector jobs available in Depression-ravaged cities like New York, Jersey City, and Chicago. In Pittsburg, one-third of Democratic ward and precinct captains became WPA project supervisors, helping to consolidate that city's Lawrence machine. The Kelly-Nash machine in Chicago used WPA funds to hire extra canvassers before elections, and "Boss Hague," to whom the entire New Jersey Democratic congressional delegation owed favors, appropriated a percentage of WPA workers' salaries to pay for campaign expenses.[79] New York's Tammany Hall machine required party affiliation for applicants for the Civil Works Administration (CWA), a 1933–1934 employment relief program. One Tammany employee boasted, "This is how we make Democrats."[80]

Patronage helped secure electoral victories. In a recent paper, Folke, Hirano, and Snyder showed that the adoption of civil service reforms reduced the reelection prospects of incumbent statewide office holders.[81] Their findings confirm the sense that machines, such as Jersey City's patronage "army" of 20,000, were indeed effective. The voting population of Jersey City was 120,000. The Hague machine instructed public-sector workers "to secure the votes of family and friends. If each worker brought in two more votes, the machine was guaranteed victory . . . "[82]

Machines also politicized access to new federal pension and welfare programs. Erie explained that Chicago's Kelly-Nash machine operatives "served as welfare brokers. To expedite Social Security and [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] eligibility . . . precinct captains initiated client contacts with social service agencies. By 1936 two-thirds of the machine's lieutenants reported serving as employment and welfare brokers, up from one-third in 1928."[83]

In southern states, where populations remained more rural and poverty rates high, vote buying remained endemic well into the twentieth century. This was the case even though the hegemony of the Democratic Party and the disenfranchisement of blacks reduced the need and hence willingness of candidates to pay for votes. However, in places where elections were competitive, vote buying persisted well into the twentieth century. Poll taxes afforded opportunities for

[77] Wright 1974, Wallis 1987.
[78] See Erie 1988, p. 136.
[79] Erie 1988, p. 129–130.
[80] Caro, 1974, quoted in Erie 1988, p. 131.
[81] Folke, Hirano, and Snyder 2011.
[82] Erie 1988, p. 124.
[83] Erie 1988, p. 134.

buying votes. As an example, Key cited a late-1940s Arkansas campaign that "put a thousand dollars or so into a county a day or two before the October 1 deadline to cover poll taxes. The holder of the poll-tax receipt is, of course, given to understand that he will support the administration candidate the following year."[84] Anti-bribery legislation in the post–15th amendment South was sometimes aimed at keeping Republican candidates from paying the poll taxes of black voters.[85]

Today, party machines are a thing of the past. The welfare state in twenty-first-century America is, generally speaking, thoroughly rule-bound, bureaucratized, and insulated from to partisan manipulation. Research into distributive politics in contemporary United States discerns programmatic politics, as when a change of partisan control of congress changes spending patterns in ways predictable from the parties' ideologies; pork-barrel politics, as when spending on sports and recreation facilities rises with the electoral vulnerability of the assemblyman or woman; and nonconditional benefits to individuals, as when spending on food stamps rises with the incumbent party's vote share in a congressional district.[86] But no clientelism.

That said, machine politics left deep imprints in American politics, some observable still. Both major parties rely on nonpartisan organizations that work hard to turn voters out and to shape their electoral choices. Their efforts include "walking-around money," presumably paid to campaign workers. In Baltimore, even as late as the 1970s, "on election day, DiPietro's precinct workers will arrive at the polls early and hand out $15 to each worker, as payment for such chores as distributing sample ballots . . . "[87] Churches also influence voters and work to boost turnout: evangelicals on the Republican side, black churches alongside of labor unions on the Democratic side. Nominally nonpartisan civic organizations link these churches even more closely to the parties, a leading example being the Moral Majority or Family Research Council's role as nexuses between the Republican Party and evangelical churches. What's more, parties command highly detailed information, down to the individual voter (and individual small donor). State and national parties – Democrats and Republicans – retain highly detailed databases that record information about individual voters, their party registration, turnout history, past party contributions, consumer patterns, and more.[88]

If detailed information about voters was what leaders "bought" when they employed brokers, have parties in the United States in the digital era returned to a kind of modernized clientelism? Whatever the answer to that question, three features distinguish contemporary party strategies from machine politics as it

[84] Key 1950, p. 594.
[85] Sikes 1928, p.24.
[86] See, respectively, Bickers and Stein 2000, Herron and Theodus 2004, and Ansolabehere and Snyder 2006.
[87] Weisskopf 1978, p. 8. We are grateful to David Mayhew for the reference.
[88] For a description of these databases, see Hersh and Schaffner 2011.

existed until a half century ago. First, the voting public is no longer composed of large segments of people who are very poor. When accusations of vote buying do appear in the contemporary United States, they tend to be in poor rural redoubts. The Appalachian region of eastern Kentucky is one of the few places where prosecutions for violations of federal vote-buying statutes persist even into the twenty-first century.[89] Compared with the usual ways in which parties mobilize electoral support across the country, these cases are isolated and anachronistic.

A second difference is that parties now lack the capacity to target (or exclude) individual voters from receiving (or being denied) state benefits or services. Even the FEMA case of partisan bias in the delivery of disaster relief, discussed in Chapter 5, was one in which good will, not credible threats of denial of future benefits, drove voters' responsiveness to largesse.[90] Today's consultants with their databases do not play the same role as the armies of live human beings, brokers, who – in the eras of Tweed or Plunkitt – could hold voters accountable for their actions at the polls.

The American electorate of the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries, finally, is unlike that of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which had nowhere to turn but to party agents or the charitable organizations, in search of transfers or protection from risk. Now government fulfills these functions. Isolated manipulations of programs as in the FEMA case notwithstanding, the vast majority of social spending by governments at all levels in the United States, especially that going to individual beneficiaries, is constrained by rules, means tests, and other abstract formulae.[91]

[89] Hence in 2010 federal prosecutors accused four men of vote buying in Perry County. According to the AP, they were accused of paying people $20 each to cast ballots for a given candidate in a 2010 primary election for a U.S. Senate seat. A similar prosection in took place in Pike County in 2004; see "Where Prosecutors Say Votes are Sold," *New York Times*, August 29, 2004. See also Sabato and Simpson 1996.

[90] See Chen 2004, 2009.

[91] Another practice, still widely used today, that is reminiscent of the heyday of the American machine is the use of party resources to convey voters to the polls, known as hauling. This spending is legal, though sometimes it is suspected of ending up in the pockets of voters and hence of bleeding into illegal vote buying (as in the Eastern Kentucky case alluded to earlier). As an example of legal hauling, in the 2010 midterm elections, the Philadelphia Democratic Party reverted to the use of "street money" to turn out the vote. As one state legislator commented, "You got this huge debate of the 21st century politics versus the 19th century, . . . I think you need a combination of both. What happens is the people on the street operation say 'OK, you need the commercials and the direct mail and all this stuff. But you also need to ensure that you are out there working.' This is a form of making sure you have full coverage." (The quote is from State Assembly Representative Dwight Evans, in "Philly Dems Lean on Tactics Shunned by Obama to get Sestak Elected," October 27, 2010, Sam Stein, *The Huffington Post*.) And social-science research confirms that get-out-the-vote campaigns are at their most effective in the United States when they involve personalized contact, over the telephone or, even more so, face-to-face canvassing. See, e.g., Gerber and Green 2000.

Party interests certainly influence the distribution of public material resources in the United States today. Changes in the level of funding and rules of distribution follow changes in party control of congress and the presidency.[92] But the resulting patterns of distribution are usually predictable from public debates and from the formalized rules of distribution; that is, they are programmatic.[93] Even in instances of nonprogrammatic distributive politics, such as the FEMA and (perhaps) Faith Based Initiative examples discussed earlier, the parties in power lack the capacity of the machines of old to hold voters to account. Writing in the 1980s, Erie noted that the party machines are "now in eclipse. Government bureaucracies and labor unions have assumed the welfare and employment functions once fulfilled by the machines. Civil service reform has limited their supply of patronage jobs. Their ethnic constituents have moved to the suburbs."[94] Banfield and Wilson, sketching in the early 1960s the machine "in its classical form," were writing about a vanishing phenomenon: "no big city today has a city-wide machine that is like the model . . . "[95]

Yet in contrast to Britain, the death of electoral clientelism in the United States was delayed and gradual. Its final demise came with reform mayors in the 1950s in Philadelphia, Jersey City, and Boston; the early 1960s in New York; the mid-1970s in Chicago; and later still in Albany and Baltimore.

The American experience, then, raises two questions. Why did American industrialization, outpacing as it did British industrialization after the Civil War, not eliminate clientelism as quickly and definitively as it had in Britain? The answer has partly to do with differences in the impact of industrialization on the electorate, but also with the relative ineffectiveness of anticorruption reform in the United States. What explains this ineffectiveness?

8.3.2 Industrialization and the Gradual Decline of Clientelism in the United States

The trends that explain the demise of clientelism in nineteenth-century Britain – the growth and growing affluence of the electorate, the greater opacity of the vote with the secret ballot and an increasingly urban and mobile electorate, the rising prominence of mass circulation newspapers linking political aspirants to increasingly literate electorates – were common to nineteenth-century America and help explain the decline of vote buying in that country as well. Yet America's development differed in several crucial ways from Britain's. These differences, as well as a more complex environment for antimachine reforms, together explain the persistence of patronage and machine politics in the United States later and at higher levels of industrialization than in Britain.

The franchise was always a more popular right in the United States, with relatively modest property qualifications in the late-eighteenth century, and

[92] See the citations in Chapter 2.
[93] See especially Bickers and Stein 2000, Levitt and Snyder 1995.
[94] Erie 1988, p. 4.
[95] Banfield and Wilson 1963, p. 116.

even those were basically eliminated by the mid-nineteenth century. (Racial and gender qualifications, obviously, persisted much longer.) The more popular franchise meant that the electorate was more tilted than the British toward poor voters, ones more willing to trade their vote for a material reward. Industrialization created a hunger for workers that was fed in large measure by immigration, and immigrant men were rapidly incorporated into the electorate. Income distribution remained more unequal in the nineteenth century United States than in Britain; in the United States, but not in Britain, health, physical stature, and other basic measures of welfare declined in the latter nineteenth century.

Hence, despite industrial growth – indeed, in some senses because of it – broad swaths of the American electorate remained economically vulnerable well into the twentieth century. Immigrant communities also reproduced some of the informational qualities of small towns, allowing political brokers to closely monitor constituents' electoral behavior, even though they resided in large cities.Only with the Depression, the New Deal, and World War II did income inequality subside somewhat. Hence by the second half of the twentieth century, the United States had developed into an industrial power in which prosperity was more equally shared.[96] The offspring of immigrants, like working-class native-born citizens, moved from the cities to the suburbs and became indifferent to the rewards that the machine might offer. In the middle-class "newspaper wards," unlike the working-class "river wards," the hod of coal and Thanksgiving turkey – as Banfield and Wilson remind us – had become a joke.[97]

A Larger U.S. Electorate

Clientelism persisted in the United States despite a large and growing electorate. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the United States was an expansive and labor-hungry country. The population grew from less than 4 million in 1790 to 10 million in 1820, 35 million in 1865, and 75 million in 1900. The United States thus began the nineteenth century with about half of the population of Britain but surged ahead of Britain in the 1840s. (See Figure 8.12.)

Even at the founding, the U.S. states conceded the right to vote to a relatively broad array of men. In 1790, 60–70 percent of adult white men had the right to vote. Property requirements began to be dismantled after 1790 and had basically been eliminated by 1850, and by 1855 taxpaying was not a qualification for voting. Hence, at mid-century, there were almost no economic qualifications for voting.[98]

[96] As in Britain, however, beginning in the last quarter of the twentieth century, income equality declined.

[97] Banfield and Wilson 1963.

[98] See the discussion in Keyssar 2001.

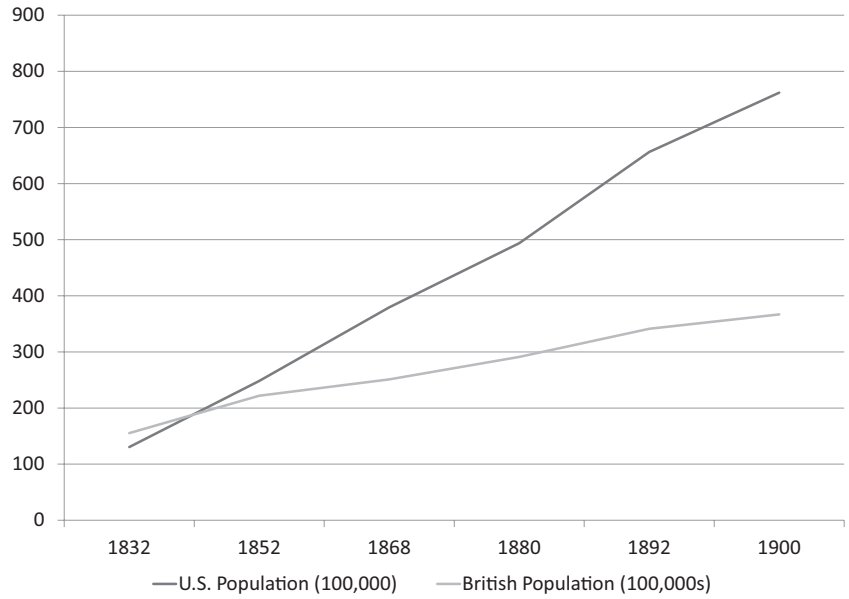

FIGURE 8.12. Populations of Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and the United States, 1832–1900. *Source:* Jeffries 2005 and U.S. Census Bureau 1949.

Nineteenth-century immigration helped swell both the population and the electorate. Immigrants arrived from Germany and Ireland early in the nineteenth century. They arrived from Italy and Eastern Europe after 1880. Cities were the destination of most Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants. In 1854 alone, 428,000 European immigrants arrived in the United States. Keyssar noted that the 3 million foreigners who arrived between 1845 and 1854 were equivalent to 15 percent of the 1845 population.[99] In 1870, New York and Philadelphia were the only cities with populations over half a million; by 1910, eight cities contained half a million people, and three of them – New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia – each had more than 1.5 million.

Immigrants were quickly absorbed into the electorate. To attract settlers, between 1850 and 1889, 18 states enacted alien voting provisions, allowing noncitizen "declarants" the right to vote.[100] (These provisions were later repealed.) Between the 1840s and the Civil War, immigrants were easily granted citizenship. Irish immigrants were particularly ready participants in elections. The number of Irish-American voters in New York and Boston tripled between 1850 and 1855; by the latter year, more than one in five voters in those cities was an Irish immigrant. Nativist reactions began to crystallize at mid-century.

[99] Keyssar 2001, p.

[100] See Keyssar 2001, p. 36, and appendix 12. "Declarants" were people who had declared their intention to be naturalized.

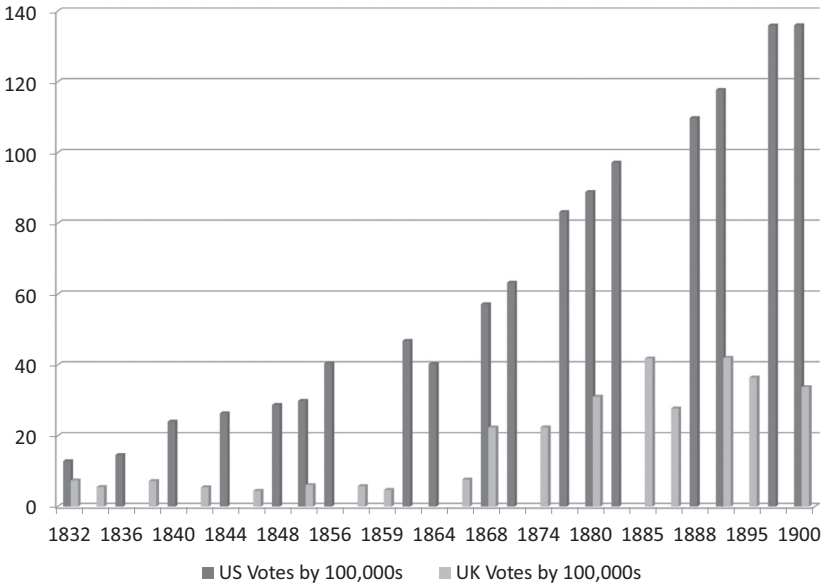

FIGURE 8.13. Votes Cast for U.S. Presidents and British MPs, 1832–1900. *Source:* Data from Leip 2005 and Craig 1989.

In the 1850s, the Know-Nothings pressed, with only limited success, for literacy requirements for voting in many states, and the federal government ratcheted up the regulation of elections and of naturalization.

The greater longevity of clientelism in the United States than in the Britain was despite a sharper growth in the overall U.S. electorate. The surging U.S. population and modest qualifications for voting (for white men) led to a large national electorate. The number of votes cast for president was around 100,000 in 1820, around 1 million in 1832, 8 million at the centennial of the founding, and 13.5 million in 1900. Despite sagging turnout – a phenomenon, as we saw, that began after 1896 – still the number of voters continued to climb, reaching 50 million in 1940.

In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, the population of the United States was 35 million, and 5.7 million votes were cast in the presidential election in 1868, or about one in six. The 13.5 million people who cast votes in the presidential elections of 1900 represented about 16 percent of the 85 million people living in the country; in the British general election of 1900, about 1.2 million votes were cast in a country whose population was around 30 million.

Figures 8.13 and 8.14 allow a comparison of the size of the active electorate relative to the general populations in the United States and in Great Britain. Figure 8.13 shows a persistently larger electorate in the United States. Before the 1840s, when the U.S. population surpassed Britain's, the larger U.S.

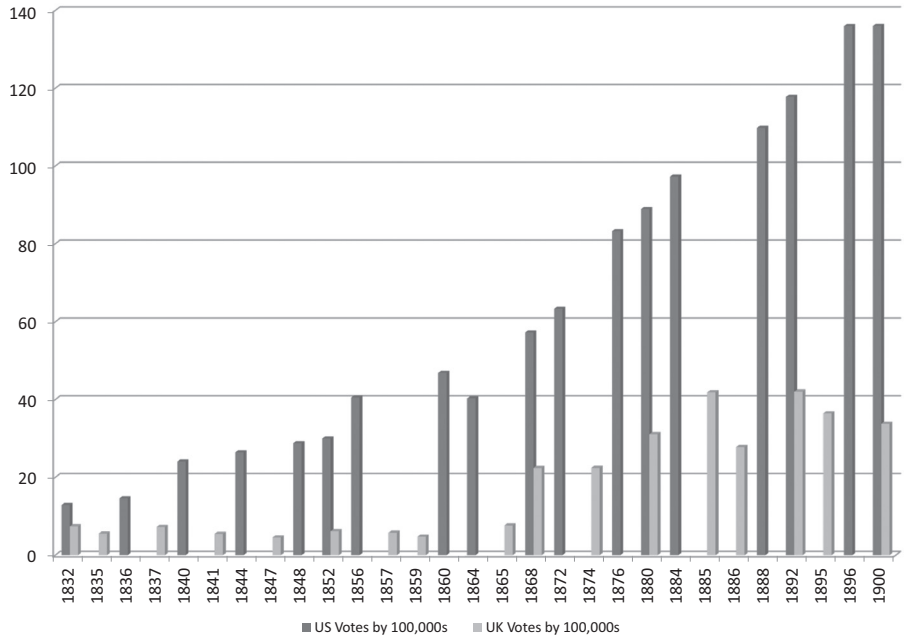

FIGURE 8.14. Votes Cast in the United States and Britain as a Percentage of Population, 1832–1900. *Source:* Data from Leip 2005 and Craig 1989.

electorate was entirely due to that country's more expansive franchise. The British electorate increased sharply after the second great reform of 1867, but still the U.S. electorate remained much larger, now fed by rapid population growth and rapid conversion of immigrants into voters. Figure 8.14 shows that, even after Britain's 1885 reform, the proportion of the U.S. population that voted was twice that of Britain's. With – by then – a much larger population, nearly four times as many votes were cast for U.S. president in 1900 than in the British general election of that same year.

The delayed demise of clientelism, as measured against its demise in Britain, was, then, despite a persistently larger electorate in America. The machine cities were populated by hundreds of thousands, in some cases millions, of voters. We posit, instead, that other factors, in particular high poverty rates, large numbers of voters populating immigrants communities, and – perhaps above all – the contrasting institutional setting, should be central to these comparisons.

8.3.3 Wealth and Poverty in the U.S. Electorate

The main reason for the decline and near disappearance of the city-wide machine was – and is – the growing unwillingness of voters to accept the inducements that it offered. The petty favors and "friendship" of the precinct captains declined in value as

immigrants were assimilated, public welfare programs were vastly extended, and per capita incomes rose steadily and sharply in war and postwar prosperity. To the voter who in case of need could turn to a professional social workers and receive as a matter of course unemployment compensation, aid to dependent children, old-age assistance, and all the rest, the precinct captain's hod of coal was a joke.[101]

Nineteenth-century industrialization of the United States, which accelerated after the Civil War, produced a larger economy and a wealthier society. In the period from 1820 to 1850, per capita income grew about 20 percent; it roughly doubled between the end of the Civil War and turn of the century. Yet nineteenth-century economic expansion did less to reduce poverty in the United States than in Britain. The United States was and is a highly unequal country, in particular in comparison with other early industrializers. In the nineteenth century, it experienced a near-steady increase in income inequality. The U.S. Gini index peaked at close to 70 in 1890 and declined to 49 in 1930. Hence although the economy grew rapidly in the nineteenth century, so did poverty. The period between 1790 and 1870 was one of a lowering of stature and life expectancy, and health got worse. "[A]cross the 19th century, population grew faster, skills per worker grew slower, and the skilled/unskilled pay ratio widened" in comparison with the period 1929–1948.[102]

Some poor voters were country folk whose families had been long resident in the United States, or who had arrived with the German migrations of the early nineteenth century. Others were city dwellers, whether working-class Protestant Yankees or – more numerous, certainly in many of the largest cities – Irish, German, Italian, or Eastern European immigrants. The immigrants who fed the labor-hungry industrial centers were, as we have seen, quickly naturalized and enfranchised. They became voters whose needs were great and whose exposure to economic and social risk was significant. Describing elections in immigrant communities in Philadelphia in 1905, Abernethy commented that "Ballot boxes were stuffed by ambitious ward leaders, voters were purchased for as little as twenty-five cents or a drink of whiskey, and voting lists were padded with phantom voters."[103]

Only with some equalization of the distribution of income, between the 1930s and the 1970s, as well as rapid post–World War II economic expansion, did the center of gravity of the electorate shift from working- to middle-class voters. This was a key factor lying behind the belated demise of American clientelism.

Despite industrialization, economic growth, and a large electorate, the party machines saw poor native-born citizens and immigrants as people whose votes could be secured with offers of whiskey, boots, or even a low-paying city

[101] Banfield and Wilson 1963, p. 121.
[102] Lindert 2000, p. 205, citing Williamson and Lindert 1980.
[103] Abernethy 1963 p. 5.

job. And members of Congress and even presidents had an incentive to channel federal resources to the machines. Presidents who shunned machines and patronage, like Rutherford Hayes, risked isolation and defections from within their party; those like FDR, who shrewdly combined programmatic mobilization and cooperation with machines, won. Postwar prosperity and the move of immigrant populations to the suburbs (as Banfield and Wilson suggested) eventually made machine politics obsolete.

8.3.4 Costs of Mass Communication in the United States

As in Britain, rising literacy and technical improvements meant that ambitious politicians who wanted to broadcast policy proposals and programs could turn to newspapers. An explosion of newspapers occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century, fostered by their distribution, at very low costs, through the U.S. Postal Service.[104] Although the press had always played a central role in party politics, Reynolds placed the rise of campaigning in the newspapers in the first decades of the twentieth century. "Full-page partisan advertising, virtually unknown in the nineteenth century, became a central component of twentieth century campaigns." He noted that the New Jersey Democratic Party created a publicity bureau for the 1907 gubernatorial campaign, institutionalizing "a new relationship between politicians and the press."[105]

8.3.5 Opacity of the Vote in the United States

Also as in Britain, and as in developing democracies today, multifaceted social relationships in nineteenth century towns were a support to vote buying. As Bensel explained, in small towns, voters were frequently "embedded in long-term personal relationships" with the agents who engaged them in these exchanges, relationships that helped the agents hold voters accountable for their choices.[106] In rural areas of New York State in the late nineteenth century, party managers "had sufficient information to follow a policy of not only paying 'floaters' to cast ballots for their parties, but also of rewarding opponents for not voting."[107]

A case of vote buying in rural Ohio at the close of the Civil War, reported by Bensel, illustrates what an important asset rich local knowledge was to party agents, even in the period when agents could still observe individual ballots. A Republican Party agent in Knox County, Ohio, in 1866 offered to pay a Mrs. Beach $10. If both Mrs. Beach and her 21-year-old son, a first-time voter,

[104] See John 1995.
[105] Reynolds 1988, p. 95.
[106] Bensel 2004, p. ix. For an excellent description of the voting process in mid-nineteenth-century America, see Bensel 2004, pp. 9–14.
[107] Cox and Kousser 1981, p. 655.

would cast ballots for the Republican candidate, each would receive $5. Under interrogation, party agent Coe explained that:

> two or three of [William's] associates that frolicked and caroused around . . . were democrats, and he was inclined to run with them . . . a young blacksmith – I don't know is name; he works with Higgins; Ira Barr, who made his boasts that he was going to make a democrat of [William] . . . We did not know how [William] stood, nor what his politics were; but we saw him often in bad company, and feared he would be led astray, and this was done in order to bring him in the way he should go at an early day [i.e., in his first election]. Coe gave William a Republican ballot, marked so that he could inspect it after the election. But the ballot that William eventually cast, retrieved for Coe by a Republican election judge, showed that William had erased the printed names of Republican candidates for governor and sheriff and written in Democratic ones. Only Mrs. Beach received $5.[108]

Hence even before the official ballot was introduced – a change we discuss later – when party agents could more easily monitor voters' actions, the interconnectedness of rural and small-town social relations meant that party agents – themselves community members – commanded detailed information about individuals, families, and work relationships. As in Britain, the shift of population from the countryside to the cities (described earlier) brought with it a greater anonymity of voters, their actions less easily observed by party agents.

That said, immigration and ethnic residential concentration had the effect of reproducing these intimate and multifaceted social relations, to some degree, in the cities. Immigrant neighborhoods were places where precinct captains and ward heelers knew a great deal about their constituents. The personal connection between brokers and other operatives, on one side, and voters, on the other, took on special importance to immigrants in new and unfamiliar surroundings. They were especially responsive to people like the Philadelphia ward boss described by Varbero, who cultivated recent Italian immigrants with a mix of personal and material appeals: "Baldi's hold on the community was secured in the fashion of the traditional ward boss. Personable and apparently benevolent, bank president Baldi often dispensed dollars in exchange for allegiance, a simple and time-honored formula for success in the American city."[109]

The cities were full of people who – whether they had arrived from the countryside or from a foreign land – felt great need; unlike in Britain, they were likely to have the right to vote. They were the stuff on which party machines were built, and their presence goes some way to explaining the persistence of

[108] Cited in Bensel 2004, pp. 47–48. Bensel reported that Coe also gave a ballot to William Beach's father. Suspecting that the father planned to vote Republican in any case, and might himself vote with William's ballot – allowing William to take the bribe and despite voting Democratic – Coe marked the father's ticket with the words "our country" and marked the son's ballot with the same words but spelled backwards.

[109] Varbero 1975, p. 285. We are grateful to David Mayhew for the reference.

clienetlism in America for decades after it had basically been extinguished in Britain.

8.3.6 Clientelism and Legislative Reforms

Clientelism flourished in nineteenth and twentieth-century America despite being illegal. Electoral bribery was recognized as a crime in common law before the passage of antibribery statutes. State constitutions also contained antibribery sections in their organic laws. The following identical language appeared in 12 state constitutions:

> Laws shall be made to exclude from office, from suffrage, and from serving as jurors, those who shall hereafter be convicted of bribery . . . The privilege of free suffrage shall be supported by laws regulating elections, and prohibiting under adequate penalties, all undue influence thereon from power, bribery, tumult, or other improper conduct.[110]

Seventeen states also included language in their constitutions disqualifying people found guilty of buying votes from holding office.[111]

Still bribery persisted, as we have seen. When authors such as Earl R. Sikes or Helen M. Rocca of the League of Women Voters wrote about vote buying in 1928, they used the present tense.[112] As did V.O. Key, observing Southern society in 1950.

The first wave of anticlientelist legislation meant to give teeth to constitutional and common law began with an 1890 New York State act, which attempted to limit campaign spending, bar certain kinds of expenditures, and publicize the sources of campaign contributions. The New York act was "feeble" in that it applied only to candidates and not to political committees.[113] By 1900, 17 states had passed laws regulating the use of money in elections, in part to discourage bribery, in part to limit the influence of corporations in politics.[114] In 1925, Congress passed the Federal Corrupt Practices Act. In addition to restrictions on campaign contributions, the 1925 act made it unlawful to promise employment to gain political support, to offer or give a bribe to influence votes, and to accept such a bribe and for public officials to solicit campaign contributions from public employees.

Legislative assaults on patronage, as on vote buying, also began in the late nineteenth century. Attempting to follow European and British examples, American reformers passed the Pendleton Civil Service Act in 1883. But

[110] Quoted in Sikes 1928, pp. 10–11. The states including this language were Alabama (1819), California (1849), Connecticut (1818), Florida (1839), Kansas (1885), Kentucky (1799), Louisiana (1812), Mississippi (1817), Oregon (1857), South Carolina (1868), and Texas (1866).

[111] Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Texas; Sikes 1928, pp. 10–11.

[112] Rocca 1928.

[113] Sikes 1928, p. 125. For a recent account, see Abu El-Haj 2011.

[114] See McCormick 1981b.

the act had limited effectiveness. Of roughly 200,000 positions in the federal government, more than half remained outside the Pendleton Act's civil-service rules.[115] Subsequent measures, under the administrations of Rutherford Hayes, Grover Cleveland, and – most vigorously – Theodore Roosevelt, reduced but did not root out patronage. As a result, well into the twentieth century party bosses employed "patronage, services, contracts, and franchises . . . to maintain power. Bosses purchased voter support with offers of public jobs and services rather than by appeals to traditional loyalties or to class interests."[116]

Federal corrupt practices legislation had to navigate around a number of legal obstacles. One was the ambiguous legal definition of political parties: were they private associations, and hence beyond the reach of legislation, or were they organizations involved in the election of Congress and hence subject to Congressional control? A second, not unrelated, obstacle was the courts' views of primary elections. Were they internal party matters, or were they the first stage of elections? The Supreme Court's majority decision in the 1921 *U.S. v. Newberry* case held primary elections to be methods by which party members chose candidates and hence not subject to Congressional regulation. In 1923, Texas passed a law making it illegal for blacks to vote in primaries. The "white primary" law was upheld by a district court in Texas. The Supreme Court reversed this decision, but on the grounds that it violated the 14th and 15th amendments of the constitution. The Court's decision left intact the construct of parties as private associations and primaries as their internal affairs, at least regarding the raising and deployment of funds.

As in Britain, in the United States as well the introduction of the Australian ballot was a blow against clientelism. And as in Britain, ballot reform in America was as much an assault by party leaders on agents and bosses as by nonpartisan reformers on parties. Revising a conventional wisdom that Progressive-era reformers forced ballot reform on reluctant parties, two leading American political historians described ballot reform as an effort to "outlaw 'treachery'" – the treachery here being the failure of party bosses and local ballot handlers to act in the interests of the candidates.[117] Local party captains could affix an "unofficial" candidate's name at the top of the ticket; they could substitute one faction's ticket for another's; they could produce "pasters" with names of friends at the head of tickets and distribute these to voters; they could "bolt" and they could "trade." "Even a candidate who had faithfully paid his assessment to the party to ensure that his name was printed on the correct ballots might discover that failure to pay a local district captain resulted in the exclusion of his ballot from the bunches. Even individual ticket pedlars at the polls might require a candidate to pay a fee to ensure that voters had

[115] Skowronek 1982, p. 69.
[116] Erie 1988, p. 2.
[117] The title of Reynolds and McCormick's 1986 essay is "Outlawing 'Treachery': Split Tickets and Ballot Laws in New York and New Jersey, 1880–1910."

an opportunity to cast the candidate's ballot."[118] In short, party leaders had myriad reasons to mistrust their own machines and to tighten their control over ballots.

The ballot and other anticlientelism reforms bore the clear imprint of Mugwumps and Progressive reformers. Yet – as Reynolds and McCormick emphasized – these reformers often saw themselves as members of parties, rather than antiparty activists. They included people such as William Mills Ivins, a Democrat New York lawyer, who were appalled at the vast sums of money in campaigns and widespread buying of votes. However, it was party leaders, in the state legislatures and in Congress, who distrusted the machines that they had relied on, who were the driving forces behind reforms.

Reynolds and McCormick made clear, as we have tried to in our account of British ballot and other reforms, that these political alliances need to be understood against the backdrop of industrialization and a changing electorate. They wrote that "candidates and leaders were paying the pedlars to put the right tickets into the right hands, and they expected better treatment for their money." They continued:

> Perhaps in an earlier day when the electorate was smaller and more deferential, the party organization had been able to deliver the vote with fewer hitches, but if that had ever been the case, it was no longer true by the 1880s. Considered in this light, it is hardly surprising that candidates and major party officials looked favorably on the proposals to restrict local leaders and to eliminate ticket pedlars entirely."[119]

8.4 CONCLUSION

The decline of electoral bribery in Britain in the United States tells us a good deal about how it worked, at the time when it remained vital in both countries. Vote buying focused on the poor; when the poor and vulnerable among the electorate shrank and the middle class grew, relatively fewer votes could be purchased with cash or minor consumption goods. The equivalent resources could attract more voters through persuasive discourse and publicity. Vote buying required close contact between brokers and voters, given its fine-grained functions of monitoring voters and delivering goods and services to them; when the electorate as a whole, and electoral districts, became more populous, the political machine became a more costly organization through which to obtain votes. The premium that machine politics places on local knowledge of constituents creates rent-seeking opportunities for brokers; when party leaders could shift to direct appeals to voters without risking their own seats and their party's prospects, they happily sloughed off their machines.

[118] Reynolds and McCormick 1986, p. 847.

[119] Reynolds and McCormick 1986, p. 848. In a similar vein, Winkler 2000, p. 877, wrote, "Party reforms sought to deprive local bosses of control over elections."