

ARTICLE

The New York *Daily News* and the History of Conservative Media

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The media outlets usually identified as building blocks of New Right are niche ideological journals (such as National Review) and radio broadcasts. As crucial as these outlets were, other mainstream publications propagating similar ideas had a far greater reach—foremost among them the New York Daily News, the highest-circulation newspaper in the country. From the 1940s through the 1960s, the Daily News espoused a conservative populism further right than National Review, binding its readers into a community based on anti-elitism and white working-class identity.

In 1955, as William F. Buckley Jr. made the case for his new magazine *National Review*, he frequently cited one primary rationale for the venture: there was no good outlet in the press for conservative ideas.¹ Many historians have agreed. Recent work on right-wing media has emphasized some of the influential predecessors to *National Review*—magazines such as *Human Events* and *Facts Forum*, and radio programs from the likes of Fulton Lewis and Clarence Manion. But while these outlets played crucial roles in generating the political philosophy of the New Right and in energizing a generation of conservative activists, they were not the only voices advocating right-wing ideology in the mass media. And despite Buckley's famous commitment to “yelling Stop,” they were far from the loudest.²

That distinction belongs instead to the country's best-selling newspaper at the time (indeed, the best-selling U.S. newspaper of all time), the New York *Daily News*. From the 1940s through the 1960s, the *Daily News* attacked the same targets as Buckley and his compatriots: bureaucrats, diplomats, taxes, regulation, and, above all, communists and their supposed fellow travelers. But whereas *National Review* was intellectual and interventionist, the *Daily News* was populist and isolationist. This distinction makes the *Daily News*—and like-minded mass-circulation newspapers such as the *Washington Times-Herald* and much of the Hearst chain—all the more important to place within the history of conservative media. If one traces the evolution of post-World War II American conservatism from Barry Goldwater to Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush, it makes sense to pinpoint *National Review* as the journalistic parent of the movement. But if one considers a parallel lineage for American conservatism, running through such figures as Robert Taft, Joseph McCarthy, George Wallace, Rush Limbaugh, and Donald Trump, the *Daily News* of the mid-twentieth century makes a more fitting patriarch.

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¹William F. Buckley Jr., “Our Mission Statement,” *National Review*, Nov. 19, 1955, <https://www.nationalreview.com/1955/11/our-mission-statement-william-f-buckley-jr/> (accessed Feb. 11, 2021); John Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York, 1988), 99, 113–4, 116.

²Buckley, “Our Mission Statement.”

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Of course, the *Daily News* was never primarily a political journal, nor was it always conservative. As a daily tabloid newspaper, it provided (and continues to provide) a concise, lively summary of breaking news, with an emphasis on local crime, scandal, entertainment, politics, and sports—although contrary to popular belief it has always given substantial coverage to major national and international stories. The essential character of the *Daily News* is perhaps best expressed in two quotations that have long been identified with the paper. The first, inscribed on the façade of the Daily News Building in midtown Manhattan, reads: “He made so many of them,” referencing a line attributed to Abraham Lincoln (“God must have loved the common people. He made so many of them”). Joseph Medill Patterson, founding editor and publisher, chose this inscription to make clear that his paper’s intended audience was not the wealthy, well-educated, or self-serious—it was everyone else.³

A second defining quote comes from the paper’s motto in its early years: “Tell it to Sweeney! The Stuyvesants will take care of themselves” (or “the Stuyvesants will understand”). This began as a message encouraging advertisers to purchase space in the *News*, but it guided the paper’s news coverage as well. Sweeney represented the typical working-class New Yorker, as contrasted with the rich, snobbish Stuyvesants (a prominent family descended from Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch colonial governor of New Netherland before it became New York).⁴ “Sweeney and Mrs. Sweeney are ambitious and expectant of Life,” read a 1923 *Daily News* ad. “They believe in God, the United States, and life insurance.” As a 1961 hagiography of the *Daily News* noted, there was “a kind of reverse snob appeal” in the “tell it to Sweeney” slogan—“Sweeney was the important man, and by implication, Stuyvesant wasn’t.”⁵

Another implication, though, is that the Stuyvesants always “take care of themselves”—and try to take advantage of Sweeney. There is an element of identity politics: the working-class white ethnics versus the long-established elites (Sweeney is an Irish surname rather than an old-stock Protestant one). Whereas other news outlets were by and for the elite, the *Daily News* proclaimed itself on the side of the average citizen, but a certain kind of average citizen: respectable, God-fearing, patriotic, contented. It would entertain them, empathize with them, assist them, and battle their perceived enemies.

The politics of the *Daily News* have shifted several times. Founded in 1919 as the first tabloid in the United States (a commuter-friendly, picture-filled format modeled on London’s successful *Daily Mirror*), it emphasized human-interest stories in its first decade—lurid crimes, scandals involving the rich and famous. This proved a highly successful strategy, as the *News* became the highest-circulation paper in the country by 1924 and the first American newspaper to average more than 1 million daily sales in 1925. It helped that the *Daily News* operated as a subsidiary of the Chicago Tribune Company, controlled by *News* publisher Joseph Medill Patterson’s cousin Robert McCormick. The Tribune Company’s financing kept the *News* afloat as it struggled to build circulation and attract advertising during its first six months, and the vast Canadian timberlands and paper mills that the Tribune Company owned ensured that the *News* had access to plenty of newsprint.⁶

³According to Patterson’s successor as publisher, Francis M. Flynn, Patterson wanted to include the first part of the quote too but could not verify its accuracy. Some accounts had Lincoln saying “common-looking people,” and some said “the Lord” rather than “God.” So Patterson chose to use only the second sentence of the quote. “Tough Nuts to Crack in ’58: FME,” *News Pix* [*Daily News* company newsletter], Jan. 1958, folder 79, Francis M. Flynn Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO (hereafter Flynn Papers). See also John Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney: The Informal History of the New York Daily News* (Garden City, NY, 1961), 133; and Leo E. McGivena, *The News: The First Fifty Years of New York’s Picture Newspaper* (New York, 1969), 184.

⁴Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney*, 133–45; Kent MacDougall, “It’s Sensational! New York Daily News Stays No. 1 With Crime, Sex, Photos—& Change,” *Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 15, 1967, 1, 12; “Legs and Limericks Built News, First Thriving Tabloid in U.S.,” *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1963.

⁵Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney*, 142–4.

⁶On the early struggles of the *Daily News* (especially its first six months of publication), see McGivena, *The News*, 46–52. On the Tribune Company’s ownership of the *Daily News* and its importance as a source of newsprint,

The *Daily News* achieved success in its first decade as a breezy, entertaining product, but Patterson—who acted as editor-in-chief although his title was “president”—decided to increase the newspaper’s emphasis on politics and national affairs when the Great Depression hit. According to one account, he told his staff that people were no longer interested in playboys and divorces but in “how they’re going to eat” and “things being done to assure the well-being of the average man and his family.”⁷ Although born into the wealthy and powerful Medill family, Patterson had been a socialist in his youth and became an enthusiastic supporter of the New Deal—as did the *Daily News*. President Franklin Roosevelt, grateful for the support of the nation’s highest-circulation newspaper at a time when most of the press opposed his policies, became friendly with Patterson, hosting him at the White House, at his home in Hyde Park, and on the presidential yacht.⁸ Once World War II broke out, however, Patterson’s politics shifted dramatically. He aligned himself with the America First movement and turned against FDR.

Much of the country’s press had a right-wing slant in the mid-twentieth century, but theirs was the moderate conservatism of the business-minded Republican establishment, typified by Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life*. The *Daily News* espoused a different strain of conservatism, as did the newspapers published by Patterson’s cousin and his sister: the *Chicago Tribune* under Robert McCormick and the *Washington Times-Herald* under Eleanor “Cissy” Medill Patterson.⁹ During World War II, Luce labeled them “the Three Furies of Isolation,” while Roosevelt fumed about “the McCormick-Patterson Axis.”¹⁰ The politics of this axis was not restricted to wartime isolationism, however. In the case of the *Daily News*, a broader worldview of reactionary populism continued to permeate its pages for more than two decades after the war—well after Patterson’s death in 1946.

Not until the late 1960s did the *Daily News* begin to tone down the conservatism of its editorials. In the 1970s, as the last of the editors and writers who had worked under Patterson retired, the paper tried to shed its reputation for hardline conservatism and appeal to an audience that was more diverse both racially and politically.¹¹ Only after real-estate billionaire Mort Zuckerman purchased the paper in 1993 did the opinion pages become unmistakably liberal (partly out of necessity, because Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post* had staked out a position as the conservative tabloid).¹² But from the 1940s through the 1960s—the years during which the *News* achieved its highest circulation—the paper expressed a brash, right-wing populism, especially on its editorial page and in its daily column on national politics.¹³

see Michael Stamm, *Dead Tree Media: Manufacturing the Newspaper in Twentieth-Century North America* (Baltimore, MD, 2018). As Stamm describes, the Tribune Company’s plant at Baie Comeau, Quebec, was created largely to provide paper for the *Daily News*; that plant provided half of the newsprint that the *Daily News* consumed in 1947, when its circulation hit its all-time high (132, 169).

⁷John Tebbel, *An American Dynasty: The Story of the McCormicks, Medills, and Pattersons* (New York, 1968), 255, 258.

⁸Kathryn Olmsted, “Lords of Isolation: Max Beaverbrook and Joe Patterson, 1935–1939,” paper presented at the Boston-California-London Conference on U.S. History, University of London, May 24, 2019.

⁹The *Chicago Tribune* and McCormick have been the subject of several books. For instance, see Lloyd Wendt, *Chicago Tribune: The Rise of a Great American Newspaper* (Chicago, 1979); and Richard Norton Smith, *The Colonel: The Life and Legend of Robert R. McCormick, 1880–1955* (Boston, 1997). For many years the *Chicago Tribune* had the second-highest circulation of any American newspaper (behind the *Daily News*), and its politics were similar to those of the *Daily News*, but without the populist sensibility. The *Times-Herald*, about which little has been written, lasted for only 15 years (1939–1954) but for a time was the highest-circulation newspaper in the capital.

¹⁰David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War* (New York, 1999), 472.

¹¹Mary Breasted, “Hey, News: Look Alive!” *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1981, 29–35.

¹²Although the *Daily News* columnists and editorials were generally left-leaning in the Zuckerman era, the paper twice endorsed the Republican candidate for president: George W. Bush in 2004 and Mitt Romney in 2012.

¹³The editorial page had four main features: (1) staff editorials, most of them written by Reuben Maury, who served as chief editorial writer from 1926 to 1972; (2) the daily editorial cartoon; (3) the “Inquiring Photographer” feature, in which a *News* photographer stopped people on the street and asked their opinion on a

That posture helped the *News* achieve its broader goal of forging a bond with readers; it also helped the *News* channel a powerful current in American politics that historians have described as white backlash or blue-collar conservatism, earning it an important place in the history of the American right. Other mass-circulation news outlets occasionally voiced similar political opinions—the *Washington Times-Herald*, some newspapers in the Hearst chain, *Reader's Digest*—but none did it so consistently, for so long, and to such a large audience, as the *Daily News*.¹⁴

A heap of scholarship exists on the growth of conservatism in the post-World War II era, but the *Daily News* does not fit into the most common narratives. Much of this work “focused on the suburbanites of the sun belt states ... as the catalysts of the conservative shift,” and “these scholars saw it as a forward-looking, sophisticated, and politically creative force in American life.”¹⁵ These studies argued that grassroots activists, most of them affluent and well-educated, served as the wellspring of modern conservatism.¹⁶ The working-class and middle-class readers of the New York *Daily News* may not have shaped the ideas of the New Right, but they had been absorbing such ideas for decades, which made them likely recruits. Other historians have focused on the elite business leaders and intellectuals behind the right's rise in the 1940s and 1950s, who, crucial though they were, did not speak to the masses.¹⁷ Many of the works that examine conservatism's populist tinge, and its appeal to the white working class, emphasize the centrality of racial resentment. An earlier generation of scholars claimed that populist conservatism originated in the backlash to the rights revolutions of the 1960s, whereas more recent work has shown that the roots of racially motivated anxiety among working-class whites go much deeper.¹⁸ In the right-wing populism of the *Daily News*, however, racism, though present, took a backseat to nationalism and anti-elitism.

Several historians have also responded to calls for more attention to the role of mass media in the history of conservatism, producing work on influential right-wing outlets and their

question about politics or daily life (the questions were chosen from reader suggestions, and a headshot of the respondents appeared next to their answers); and (4) the “Voice of the People” forum—letters to the editor in which readers responded to *Daily News* articles and to other “Voicers.” The politics column, labeled “Capitol Stuff” or “Capitol Circus,” appeared nearly every day on page 4.

¹⁴The *Washington Times-Herald* had a far smaller circulation than the New York *Daily News*, and it was bought out by the *Washington Post* in 1954; *Reader's Digest* was a monthly magazine and its political content did not always have a predictable slant; the Hearst newspapers were in serious decline by the 1950s, and because each had an independent editorial board, they did not always follow a hard-right, isolationist line. These factors make the *Daily News* especially worthy of study.

¹⁵Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A State of the Field,” *Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (Dec. 2011): 723–43, here 727.

¹⁶Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ, 2001); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York, 1995); Neils Bjerre-Poulsen, *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement, 1945–1965* (Copenhagen, 2002).

¹⁷Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945–60* (Urbana, IL, 1994); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York, 2009); Edward H. Miller, *Nut Country: Right-Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy* (Chicago, 2015).

¹⁸For earlier work, see Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York, 1991); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991); and Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York, 1995). For more recent work, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ, 2003); Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago, 2002); and Kenneth D. Durr, *Behind the Backlash: White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940–1980* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003).

backers.¹⁹ These are much-needed contributions, but they all focus on media outlets that had either a small following or a narrow political focus (or both, in many cases).²⁰ The *Daily News* occupied a different space. It had a larger audience than almost any print-media outlet in the country, and its right-wing messages were sometimes overshadowed by seemingly apolitical coverage of crime and human-interest stories (although such stories made up a smaller proportion of the paper's coverage than most critics seemed to assume—and many of those stories, by the way they treated disorder and nonconformity, carried strong political messages).

To be sure, a few works acknowledge the importance of the *Daily News* and similar mass-circulation outlets to the far right in the early years of the Cold War. Michael Kazin's history of populism notes how the *Daily News* and Hearst columnist Westbrook Pegler played up the threat of "pinkos," "reds," "Commies," and "crypto-Commies" using muscular language to pit "Mr. and Mrs. Average American" against an "enemy elite."²¹ Nicole Hemmer's study of right-wing media does not mention the *Daily News*, but it highlights the importance of large newspapers such as McCormick's *Chicago Tribune* and Eugene Pulliam's *Indianapolis Star*, *Indianapolis News*, and *Arizona Republic*. If extreme-right-wing organizations such as the John Birch Society lost the support of these newspapers, Hemmer notes, they were essentially done for.²²

The burgeoning scholarship on right-wing populism in the modern United States should be enriched by considering the impact of the *Daily News* and similar newspapers. Right-wing populism has been animated by a disdain for intellectual elites, by the exaltation of masculinity and toughness, and by a sense of victimhood, or fear of losing status relative to the "other."²³ The most effective proponents of right-wing populism delight in violating norms of political correctness for entertainment value. The *Daily News* in the mid-twentieth century embodied all of these characteristics. With a readership that likely reached as high as 10 million people, historians would be remiss to overlook it.²⁴

"In the 1930s," Kenneth Durr writes, "blue-collar Americans had targeted elite opponents in corporate boardrooms—'economic royalists,' as Roosevelt called them—but by the 1950s

¹⁹Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism," 735; Heather Hendershot, *What's Fair on the Air: Cold War Right-Wing Broadcasting and the Public Interest* (Chicago, 2011); Heather Hendershot, *Open to Debate: How William F. Buckley Put Liberal America on the Firing Line* (New York, 2016); Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia, 2016); A. J. Bauer, "Before 'Fair and Balanced': Conservative Media Activism and the Rise of the New Right" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, Sept. 2017); Bryan Hardin Thrift, *Conservative Bias: How Jesse Helms Pioneered the Rise of Right-Wing Media and Realigned the Republican Party* (Gainesville, FL, 2014)

²⁰For instance, see James Brian McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press: The Media's Role in the Rise of the Right* (Evanston, IL, 2008), which cites *National Review*, along with its smaller intellectual brethren *Human Events*, *The Freeman*, and *Bookman*, as leading a conservative resurgence in the 1940s and 1950s (139–43).

²¹Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, revised edition (Ithaca, NY, 2017), 170–1.

²²Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 104.

²³For instance, see Durr, *Behind the Backlash*; Timothy Lombardo, *Blue-Collar Conservatism: Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia and Populist Politics* (Philadelphia, 2018); Reece Peck, *Fox Populism: Branding Conservatism as Working Class* (New York, 2019); Brian Rosenwald, *Talk Radio's America: How an Industry Took Over a Political Party That Took Over the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2019); and Lee Bebout, "Weaponizing Victimhood: Discourses of Oppression and the Maintenance of Supremacy on the Right," in *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, eds. Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer (New York, 2020), 64–83.

²⁴This estimated readership is based on the circulation of the *Daily News* and *Sunday News*, assuming as most readership statistics do that each copy of a print publication is read by two to four people on average. At its height in the late 1940s, the *News* sold an average of more than 2 million copies on weekdays and roughly 4.5 million on Sundays. Its weekday circulation was above 2 million and its Sunday circulation above 3 million from the early 1940s until the late 1960s. These circulation numbers are taken from the figures that the *News* published in each edition, usually on page 2. Any figures the paper printed would likely have been verified numbers from the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

they viewed the denizens of universities and bureaucracies—policy makers rather than money makers—as the bigger threat.”²⁵ This is precisely the transformation that Joe Patterson and his *New York Daily News* underwent, but it happened earlier, in the 1940s. The *News* castigated intellectuals and State Department bureaucrats for supposed giveaways to other countries, especially after World War II. As the Cold War progressed, the paper’s critiques of liberals in government and the intelligentsia attacked them as being soft on communism or perhaps even secretly devoted to the communist cause. Durr takes note of this development, writing that by the 1950s, “anticommunism had been wedded to anti-elitism, reinvigorating and redirecting the populism that had long characterized white working-class political thought away from economic and toward political elites.”²⁶

Much of the *Daily News*’s opposition to American involvement in World War II and in postwar rebuilding hinged on the notion that the United States was giving away too much to other countries and that elites were engineering an anti-American conspiracy. The Lend-Lease Act, according to the *News* editorial page, should have been called the “dictatorship bill” because of the power it gave the president to dole out taxpayer money and, in the view of the *News*, to “take us into the war.”²⁷ In the fall of 1941, the sheer volume of U.S. defense spending (a combination of Lend-Lease funds and general military buildup) prompted an even more alarmist editorial, in which the *News* suggested that the defense budget was part of “an actual bloodless revolution of a Communist or Fascist character” being “planned by various high New Dealers.” It laid out an elaborate conspiracy theory by which the government would take over private business and concluded by citing the “fact” that “many New Dealers are Communist or Fascist minded and openly say that the democratic system is done for.”²⁸

Once the United States entered World War II, the *Daily News* dropped its isolationism in favor of a boisterous militarism, but bitterness at the elites running the war effort occasionally cropped up—as did conspiracy-mongering. When in 1943 Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce coined the term “globaloney” to refer to a proposal from Vice President Henry Wallace, the *Daily News* seized on it, devoting three editorials to the notion, which it expanded far beyond Luce’s original formulation.²⁹ Globaloney, according to the *News*, was a plan for the United States to “buy the Presidency of the World by means of a worldwide WPA [Works Progress Administration, the Depression-era jobs program],” at which point “all the thinking and deciding will be done for us by a great central Brain at Washington.” Behind this conspiracy, the *News* warned, was a network of shadowy elites. “One of [Supreme Court Justice] Felix Frankfurter’s major activities as a leading professor in the Harvard Law school,” the editorial claimed, “was to place bright young lawyers who thought as he did in key Government positions. Nowadays, Washington is full of these persons, and they wield great power; and their hope is to use this war as a means of bringing some kind of Socialism or Communism to the United States.”³⁰

The *Daily News* editorial offered up a simple alternative to this “globaloney” conspiracy: the credo of “Americanism”—which the *News* seemed to use as a synonym for “America First.” Although the America First Committee disbanded after Pearl Harbor, and the term fell out of favor, Patterson stuck with it. A 1944 editorial titled “America First” expressed dismay at

²⁵Durr, *Behind the Backlash*, 33.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 51.

²⁷“Secretary Hull on the Dictatorship Bill,” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 17, 1941, 27; “It Isn’t a ‘Lease-Lend Bill,’” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 24, 1941, 27. (All page numbers on *Daily News* articles are taken from the “main edition” as archived on newspapers.com as of July 14, 2021; some articles may have appeared on different pages in different editions.)

²⁸“Is This the Revolution?” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 19, 1941, 19.

²⁹“Globaloney,” *New York Daily News*, Feb. 11, 1943, 27; “More About ‘Globaloney,’” *New York Daily News*, Feb. 21, 1943, 31; “The Issue in ’44—Americanism Vs. Globaloney,” *New York Daily News*, July 7, 1943, 29.

³⁰“The Issue in ’44—Americanism Vs. Globaloney,” *New York Daily News*, July 7, 1943, 29.

the way intellectuals had stigmatized the notion of America First (although in truth the movement had been sullied by the Nazi sympathies of its leading figures, especially Charles Lindbergh). The *News* complained that “when an American says he is for America first ... he commits some kind of crime in the eyes of many of our most ponderous American thinkers.”³¹ *Daily News* commentary continued to insist on America First policies after the war, often blaming soft or effete elites for being overly generous to undeserving foreigners.

The leaders of Britain and the Soviet Union, a January 1946 editorial argued, had “no use for our government except as a source of money,” and given that the United States had not started the war but had helped to win it for the Allies, “what do we owe them, as compared to what they owe us?”³² The editorial argued for an “America First” policy of using proposed foreign-aid funds for national defense and to give bonuses to veterans. In another editorial, the *News* suggested that the war itself had been a waste. After conducting an “audit,” the editorial concluded that all the United States “got out of it” was “a string of Pacific islands which we can use as bases for our future Pacific defense if we have sense enough to hold onto them.”³³ Similarly, an editorial complained, the United States received no “gratitude” from countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Russia for the money it was putting into the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.³⁴ An editorial cartoon depicted Uncle Sam as a drunk bar patron ordering up another round of money for Stalin and his comrades, while Stalin laughs and kicks Uncle Sam in the seat of his pants.³⁵

The *Daily News* opposed the Marshall Plan and the United Nations as pointless giveaways of American resources, and its editorials took a similarly dim view of NATO. As Congress prepared to ratify the NATO treaty, an editorial lamented that it would require the United States to “give away large numbers of firstclass weapons we could use ourselves” and to “dilute our strength ... for the benefit of a bunch of weak sisters [the NATO allies].”³⁶ In 1953, John O'Donnell, who wrote the *News's* daily Capitol Stuff column, seized upon a general strike taking place in France as evidence that foreign aid was a foolish waste. He called the strike a “sobering cold shower” for the “bleeding hearts” and “global do-gooders.” It showed, according to O'Donnell, that France was so “Commie-dominated” that they could never be a reliable ally in the event of Soviet aggression, and that therefore “our hard cash [aid money] and golden oratory have been wasted” and “we've been played for a sucker.”³⁷

The themes of weakness and effeminacy recurred over and over in the *Daily News* attacks on U.S. foreign policy—and in the right-wing populism of the era more broadly. This tied in with the homophobia of the Lavender Scare, in which men suspected as gay were hounded out of government jobs on the assumption that they would be vulnerable to seduction and blackmail by communist agents. David K. Johnson describes how the mass-circulation right-wing press helped fuel the anti-gay crusade, noting in particular the influence of Hearst columnist Westbrook Pegler and of the conservative *Washington Times-Herald* (sister paper of the *Daily News*, which reprinted most *News* editorials and cartoons dealing with national issues).³⁸

³¹“America First,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 11, 1944, 11.

³²“Why Loan Them \$10,000,000,000?” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 26, 1946, 13.

³³“Auditing the War,” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 20, 1946, 41.

³⁴“Let UN Take Over Relief,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 30, 1946, 35.

³⁵“Father, Dear Father, Come Home with Me Now” (editorial cartoon), *New York Daily News*, Sept. 6, 1946, 29.

³⁶“Uncle Sap Makes It Official,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 19, 1949, 13.

³⁷John O'Donnell, “Capitol Stuff,” *New York Daily News*, Aug. 14, 1953, 4.

³⁸David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, 2004), 6–7, 68–71. A *Washington Times-Herald* editorial cartoon reprinted in Johnson's book (second page of plates following p. 99), accusing President Truman of protecting “traitors and queers,” appeared a day earlier in the *New York Daily News*, alongside an anti-gay editorial, “Okay—Political It Is,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 30, 1950, 47. On the *Times-Herald* publishing *Daily News* editorials, see John

But the *Daily News* also contributed to the furor over “queers” holding government jobs. Michael Kazin and Stephen Whitfield have argued that one March 1950 column by John O’Donnell in particular drove the national conversation.³⁹ O’Donnell wrote that U.S. foreign policy was “dominated by an all-powerful, supersecret inner circle of highly educated, socially high-placed sexual misfits in the State Department, all easy to blackmail, all susceptible to blandishments by homosexuals in foreign nations.”⁴⁰ This statement combined several themes at the core of the right-wing populism of the *Daily News*: an effete, elite-led conspiracy to betray American interests to the communists.

Well into the 1960s, *Daily News* critiques of U.S. foreign policy employed homophobic language. Two editorials in March 1965 used the term “panty waist” to describe the State Department—one in large, all-capitals type as an editorial headline.⁴¹ Nor was the homophobia confined to the editorial page, as evidenced by the *Daily News*’s infamous article on the 1969 Stonewall riots. Headlined “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad,” the article treated the violent clash as humorous and mercilessly mocked the Stonewall patrons’ sexuality.⁴² However, anti-gay barbs most frequently emanated from the editorial page. In 1972, a *Daily News* editorial applauding the Supreme Court ruling that state governments could refuse to employ homosexuals included the sentence: “Fairies, nances, swishes, fags, lezzes—call ’em what you please—should of course be permitted to earn honest livings in nonsensitive jobs.”⁴³ It prompted a large protest outside the News Building led by the Gay Activists Alliance.⁴⁴

The *Daily News*’s emphasis on traditional masculinity and gender norms showed up regularly on the editorial page. The daily “Inquiring Photographer” feature, in which people on the street were asked the same question, often focused on male–female relationships, and almost always reinforced sexist notions. Typical questions included “Can you truly say from personal experience that a girl’s ‘no’ actually means ‘yes?’” and “Do you secretly enjoy being ogled on the street?” (asked of women; four of the six included responders said yes).⁴⁵ The reader letters that *Daily News* editors chose to include in Voice of the People sometimes expressed a shocking degree of misogyny. In one instance in 1950, a reader wrote in to ask for advice on how to deal with the fact that his wife restricted his spending. The *News* printed three letters in response. One told him, “Your wife’s wearing the pants. Those things you have on are lace panties!” A second suggested he kill himself or else “remember that every wife, no matter how good she is, deserves a good beating once in a while.” A third, who signed his letter “A Wife Beater,” said the man should throw some money on the floor, “And if your old bag goes to pick it up, kick her right in the teeth.”⁴⁶

Tolerance for this kind of misogynist extremism marked a key respect in which the *Daily News* staked a place farther to the right than publications such as *National Review*. Its support for conspiracy theories was another. Editorials and the Capitol Stuff column frequently warned of conspiracies to bring socialism or communism to the United States in some form—conspiracies perpetrated by gays, liberals, bureaucrats, or some combination. As Kazin notes, the *Daily News* enthusiastically endorsed the best-selling book *The Road Ahead* (1949), praising author

Bainbridge, “Profiles: Editorial Writer,” Part 1 of 3, *New Yorker*, May 24, 1947, 47; and Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney*, 185.

³⁹Kazin, *Populist Persuasion*, 170–1; Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, MD, 1991), 44.

⁴⁰John O’Donnell, “Capitol Stuff,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 27, 1950, 4. This was only the most inflammatory of several columns O’Donnell wrote about gays in the State Department.

⁴¹“A Panty-Waist Answer,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 1, 1965, 27; “A Favorite Soviet Device,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 22, 1965, 29.

⁴²Jerry Lisker, “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad,” *New York Daily News*, July 6, 1969, Section 2, 1.

⁴³“Any Old Jobs for Homos?” *New York Daily News*, Apr. 5, 1972, 61.

⁴⁴Gay Activists Alliance, Protest flyer, no date, box 32, Morty Manford Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York, NY.

⁴⁵Jimmy Jemail, “The Inquiring Photographer,” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 29, 1946, 19, and Aug. 13, 1964, 41.

⁴⁶“Voice of the People,” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 7, 1950, 13, and Jan. 16, 1950, 21.

John T. Flynn's theory that President Truman had been (in the words of a *News* editorial) "made a prisoner" by "masked Socialists" who would make you "a slave to a government which hammers your living standard downward" on the way to "out and out Russian style communism." The *Daily News* was joined in its support for Flynn's book by *Reader's Digest*, which had an audience even larger than the *News's* and, like the *News*, had a right-wing perspective but focused mainly on non-ideological content.⁴⁷

William F. Buckley and *National Review* made a conscious decision to distance themselves from the John Birch Society and its allegations that figures such as Earl Warren and Dwight Eisenhower were communist dupes or perhaps even secret communist agents.⁴⁸ The *Daily News*, by contrast, echoed the Birch Society's conspiracy theories and covered the group sympathetically even after most mainstream conservatives had disavowed it. Although the *News* stopped short of alleging that Warren was a secret communist, it launched an editorial crusade against the "Warren Court" throughout 1958, with at least seven editorials accusing the court of being "pro-Red," "kind to Communists," and enabling "the criminal communist conspiracy."⁴⁹ The *Daily News's* first substantial mention of the Birch Society came in a 1961 editorial headlined "What Is This J.B.S.?" It cited Barry Goldwater's defense of the group, and portrayed its members and its founder, Robert Welch, as simply devoted to "battl[ing] Communism day and night."⁵⁰

The *News* tried to draw an equivalence between the Birch Society and Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the liberal anti-communist group founded by Eleanor Roosevelt and other established and widely respected figures, which the *News* labeled "ultra-liberal" and "pinko."⁵¹ In the lead-up to the 1962 congressional elections, political columnist Paul Healy devoted an entire article to the idea that Republicans should respond to questions about the Birch Society by talking about the ADA. Both groups, Healy noted, had relatively few members, "But because their image is one of extremism and their spokesmen are influential and aggressive, they command public attention" (in truth the ADA did not have an extremist image, despite right-wing efforts to brand it as such).⁵² Prior to the 1964 election, an Inquiring Photographer feature still asked, "Should the ADA be as much of a campaign issue as the John Birch Society?" (four of six featured respondents said yes).⁵³ The sympathetic coverage of the John Birch Society continued even after Goldwater's landslide defeat in 1964. An October 1965 article in the paper's news pages sounds as though it were copied verbatim from a Birch press release. It states the "news" that JBS leadership sought a meeting with top Republican leaders and President Lyndon Johnson (all information and quotes are attributed to a Birch Society spokesman; the meeting never happened).⁵⁴ In 1970, the *News* published a positive profile of an "offshoot" of the Birch Society "flourish[ing]" in suburban Westchester County, New York.⁵⁵

⁴⁷Kazin, *Populist Persuasion*, 173; "Like the Life You Lead? Better Read This Book," *New York Daily News*, Oct. 10, 1949, 29.

⁴⁸Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right*, 101–3.

⁴⁹"Memo to Congress," *New York Daily News*, Feb. 3, 1958, 25; "Meet the Warren Court—And How," *New York Daily News*, May 31, 1958, 13; "If Congress Surrenders," *New York Daily News*, June 16, 1958, 29; "Warren Court Rebuked, 295–46," *New York Daily News*, July 12, 1958, 15; "Warren Court Rapped Again," *New York Daily News*, July 17, 1958, 37; "Warren Jailbreak Goes On," *New York Daily News*, Aug. 6, 1958, 31; "Earl Warren Supreme Court," *New York Daily News*, Sept. 18, 1958, 43.

⁵⁰"What Is This J.B.S.?" *New York Daily News*, Apr. 10, 1961, 27.

⁵¹"Anything to Choose," *New York Daily News*, Sept. 9, 1956, 51; Paul Healy, "Capitol Circus," *New York Daily News*, Jan. 31, 1962, 4.

⁵²Paul Healy, "Capitol Circus," *New York Daily News*, Jan. 31, 1962, 4.

⁵³Jimmy Jemail, "The Inquiring Photographer," *New York Daily News*, Sept. 13, 1964, 79.

⁵⁴Peter Turkel, "Birchers Seek Chats With LBJ, GOP Bigs," *New York Daily News*, Oct. 30, 1965, 13.

⁵⁵William Sherman, "Offshoot of John Birch Society Flourishes in Yorktown Heights," *New York Daily News*, Mar. 8, 1970, Westchester-Fairfield section, W14.

Despite its status as a powerful media voice, the *Daily News* remained somewhat aloof from other right-wing news outlets. Few *Daily News* staffers came from ideological organs or went to work for them after leaving the *News*, because very few people were involved in producing the *News*'s opinion content, and they tended to start young and stay on until retirement. Reuben Maury wrote the editorials and selected the letters to the editor from 1926 until 1972; John O'Donnell served as the political columnist from the early 1930s until his retirement in 1961; C. D. Batchelor was the main editorial cartoonist from the early 1930s until 1969. Still, plenty of mutual admiration existed between the *Daily News* and niche right-wing outlets. *The American Nationalist*, a periodical published by the arch-isolationist North Carolina senator Robert Reynolds, requested and received permission to reprint at least two *Daily News* editorials during World War II, praising them as "excellent" and "a peach."⁵⁶ When *National Review* launched in 1955, the *Daily News* published an editorial (complete with head shot of Buckley) urging its readers to subscribe to this "vigorous, well-rounded, readable journal of the best and most constructive conservative opinion in the United States."⁵⁷ The same year, the *Daily News* came to the defense of Facts Forum, the broadcasts backed by right-wing billionaire H. L. Hunt. At a time when, according to Facts Forum producer Hardy Burt, the program faced "unfounded accusations" of being "pro-McCarthy, pro-Fascist, anti-Democratic, anti-Semitic," the *Daily News* devoted an entire column to Facts Forum, portraying it as an honest, non-ideological organization unfairly targeted by communists or communist dupes.⁵⁸ At least one testament to New Right organs' appreciation for the *Daily News* wound up in the files of its journalists: a clipping from a right-wing magazine called *Rally*, from 1967, essentially a love letter to the *News* and a lament that elites did not take it seriously. The article gushed about all aspects of the paper but said that "the real gem of the *News* ... is its editorial page."⁵⁹

Those who disagreed with the *Daily News*'s politics naturally had a different take. *Life* magazine, itself a Republican-leaning outlet, declared in a 1949 editorial that the *News* made *Life* "sound like a socialist sheet by comparison" (*Life*'s editorial was full of praise for the *News* apart from its editorial page).⁶⁰ In 1964, the folk singer Tom Paxton released a satirical song about the paper and its reactionary editorial positions, titled "Daily News." Mimicking the viewpoint of a *Daily News* reader, Paxton sings the praises of "Saint Joe McCarthy" while lamenting the UN charter, the graduated income tax, and the "commies" in the civil-rights movement.⁶¹ Despite the title "Daily News," the song really mocks the newspaper's readers rather than the paper itself—depicting the mythical "Sweeney" as a gullible, spiteful relic.

The *Daily News*, in its editorial viewpoints and coverage choices, often took positions outside the mainstream of conservatism. It is difficult to determine whether readers purchased the paper in spite of or because of those positions. But to many readers in the *News*'s target audience—whites who saw themselves as working class or middle class—its politics were likely just part of its plainspoken style and willingness to fight for the common people.

⁵⁶Robert R. Reynolds to J. M. Patterson, Mar. 8, 1944 and Mar. 18, 1944, folder 4, box 37, Joseph Medill Patterson Papers, Lake Forest College Library Archives and Special Collections, Lake Forest, IL [hereafter Patterson Papers].

⁵⁷"A Voice for Conservatism," *New York Daily News*, Nov. 14, 1955, 31.

⁵⁸Ben Gross, "Hardy Burt Says He'll Sue 'Smearers' of His Facts Forum Programs," *New York Sunday News*, Jan. 9, 1955, Section 2, 15. Three years earlier, the *News* published a flattering profile of Hunt in which Facts Forum was depicted in a very positive light: "He's the Richest Man in the United States," *New York Sunday News*, June 29, 1952, 62–3.

⁵⁹Neal B. Freeman, "Who Reads the *News*?" *Rally*, Mar. 22, 1967, folder 81, Theo Wilson Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO [hereafter Wilson Papers].

⁶⁰"Speaking of the 'Daily News'..." *Life*, Aug. 15, 1949, 26.

⁶¹"Daily News Song (Words and Music by Tom Paxton)," folder 62, Wilson Papers; Discogs.com, "Tom Paxton—Ramblin Boy," <https://www.discogs.com/Tom-Paxton-Ramblin-Boy/release/1731921> (accessed July 14, 2021).

Many of the *Daily News's* detractors, and journalists at more high-brow outlets, claimed that the *News* owed its popularity to its focus on sex, violence, splashy photos, and comic strips, and that few readers gave serious consideration to the editorial viewpoints. As one critic wrote to publisher Joseph Medill Patterson in 1943, "Your circulation is composed primarily of readers who are interested not so much in your editorial page as in the 'private lives' of Dick Tracy and Smilin' Jack [two popular *Daily News* comics]."⁶² As another put it, "The average citizen who buys the *News* does so because it is 2¢, a picture paper, and convenient for those who read while they stand. Fortunately, few are impressed with your editorials."⁶³ To be sure, these features attracted many readers, but if the formula were so simple, other tabloids would have achieved the same success. Serving the largest city in the United States obviously helped the *News* become the country's circulation leader, but its popularity was unique. In the early 1950s, when New York had seven daily newspapers, the *News* reached more than half of the families in the metropolitan area during the week, as well as an astonishing 65 percent on Sundays.⁶⁴

A more convincing explanation for the success of the *Daily News* has to do with the bond the paper formed with its readers. It helped them digest the news, it provided them with a sense of community in the vast, impersonal metropolis of New York, and it fought for that community's interests. The men running the *Daily News* recognized the importance of these attributes. Francis M. Flynn, the paper's publisher from 1946 to 1972, cited "terse, lively editing of the news of the day" as the most likely reason for the *News's* devoted following.⁶⁵ "The reader is given the news of general interest in brief form and the presentation is never dull," he said in a speech in the late 1940s.⁶⁶ A self-promotional editorial that the paper published in 1961 declared that it provided "all the news practically anyone really needs to know each day. Every news story is trimmed to the meat and bone of its essential facts, with all the fat discarded, by some of the most expert editors and rewrite men in the United States (or anywhere else)." The editorial contrasted this approach with that of the more high-brow *New York Times* and *New York Herald-Tribune*, saying, "We read them both, daily and Sunday, until our eyeballs start to glaze over."⁶⁷

This "terse, lively" compendium of the day's news provided a valuable service for readers pressed for time or with little inclination to read the text of speeches or plodding, comprehensive dispatches from Washington. There were plenty of stories about politics and national affairs in the *Daily News*. Browsing through back issues from the 1940s through the 1960s, one finds a roughly equal number of articles devoted to crime or scandal as to "serious" national news.⁶⁸ If a story appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*, it would almost always be covered toward the front of the *Daily News*, recalled Frank Holeman, a Washington correspondent for the *News* from the 1940s until the 1960s. "You just had to make it more palatable, [more] easily understandable, more interesting," he said.⁶⁹

⁶²Ernest Lilienstein to J. M. Patterson, Aug. 20, 1943, folder 13, box 37, Patterson Papers.

⁶³James Betts to J. M. Patterson, Feb. 17, 1943, folder 13, box 37, Patterson Papers.

⁶⁴"Notes on the New York News" (promotional material prepared for advertisers), June 15, 1952, folder 13, box 33, Patterson Papers. The seven newspapers were the *Herald-Tribune*, the *Post*, the *World-Telegram & Sun*, the *Journal-American*, the *Times*, the *Mirror*, and the *Daily News* (the *Wall Street Journal* was also published daily in New York but focused narrowly on business news).

⁶⁵Flynn's initial title was president and general manager, but he performed the functions of the publisher and assumed that title by the late 1940s.

⁶⁶Speech transcript titled "Print the News and Raise Hell," undated (circa 1947), folder 65, Flynn Papers.

⁶⁷"Correction, Please," *New York Daily News*, Dec. 18, 1961, 33.

⁶⁸Using the digitized backfile of the *Daily News* on newspapers.com, I made a tally of the number of articles in each category on selected days in 1946, 1950, 1954, 1958, and 1962.

⁶⁹Frank Holeman interview by Niel M. Johnson, June 9, 1987, transcript, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/holeman> (accessed Feb. 20, 2021).

And the *Daily News* went beyond simply informing its audience. As David Paul Nord, Gunther Barth, and Benedict Anderson have noted, newspapers can foster a strong sense of community among their readers, binding them to one another and to the newspaper.⁷⁰ More recently, Julia Guarneri shows how newspaper managers between 1880 and 1930 made concerted efforts to establish their papers as vehicles for community building and community service.⁷¹ The *Daily News* is a prime example. Its leaders wished to foster a sense of community and to position the paper as the community's advocate and defender. In the late 1960s, the *Daily News* produced an internal report on how to reverse its declining circulation trend. It included these recommendations on the first page: "We should reemphasize what has always made The News a champion: a consuming concern for ordinary people, reporting their foibles, listening to their needs, fighting their fights—and at times crusading. We should, above all, be a great community newspaper, covering the New York area better than any other publication."⁷² And the report concluded: "People want someone to talk to, someone to listen to, someone to help them with their problems, to fight their fights. No one can perform this role better than The News. Despite New York's vaunted sophistication and coldness, it needs a great community newspaper ... a family newspaper ... a newspaper that cares."⁷³

Although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what kind of bond existed between the *Daily News* and its readers, it appears that the readers who stayed with the paper even as its circulation declined felt the kind of connection with it that this internal report outlined. In 1982, the *New York Times* commissioned a study of *Daily News* readers who might switch over to the *Times*. Among other things, the study assessed (using in-depth interviews with its subjects) how these readers felt about the *Daily News*. It found that *News* readers considered it the "people's paper," "trustworthy," "oriented to human problems and personal issues," and "partisan, pro-New York—the New York newspaper."⁷⁴

From its inception, the *News* tried to fulfill this role as a community newspaper. Early on, the effort took the form of contests and giveaways. The paper's first issue, in June 1919, featured a full-page announcement for a contest to award \$10,000 to the "most beautiful girl in Greater New York."⁷⁵ Although this gained the paper only 1,000 new subscribers, it was followed by many other opportunities for readers to submit material to the *News* in hopes of receiving prize money.⁷⁶ The contests were designed to engage each member of the family. In addition to beauty contests (several a year in the paper's first decade), the *News* dangled the prospect of money for a daily recipe, children's drawings, predictions of sports scores, "bright sayings" from children, limericks, "embarrassing moments," and more.⁷⁷ As Neil Harris has argued, contests like these "suggested that to *News* readers at least, New York was a 'big town' as well as a 'big

⁷⁰David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana, IL, 2001); Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1980); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

⁷¹Julia Guarneri, *Newsprint Metropolis: City Papers and the Making of Modern Americans* (Chicago, 2017), 7–8, 102–46.

⁷²Report "Summary and Recommendations," undated (circa late 1960s), folder Miscellaneous, container Speeches part 1, Michael J. O'Neill Papers (uncatalogued collection), Columbia University Library, New York, NY. Ellipses in original.

⁷³Report "Summary and Recommendations."

⁷⁴Fine, Travis, & Associates, "Attitudes of 'Times Target' *Daily News* Readers," Feb. 1982, folder 7, box 16, Seymour Topping Papers, New York Times Company Records, New York Public Library, New York, NY.

⁷⁵"\$10,000 Will Be Given to New York's Prize Beauty! Who Is She?" *Illustrated Daily News*, June 24, 1919, 16.

⁷⁶Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney*, 165–6.

⁷⁷John D. Stevens, *Sensationalism and the New York Press* (New York, 1991), 129–30; Chapman, *Tell It to Sweeney*, 166–7, 177–8.

city,' and that village values of personal curiosity and human interest remained powerful despite the city's growth."⁷⁸

Starting in the 1930s, John D. Stevens notes, as the *News* began "taking itself more seriously ... and becoming more respectable," contests became fewer and less prominent.⁷⁹ Instead, the paper used other means to build a community of readers. The most noteworthy effort was the *Daily News* Information Bureau (called the Reader Service Bureau when created in the mid-1920s). New Yorkers were invited to call, send a letter, or visit the *Daily News* building to receive answers to any question they might have, about nearly any topic or concern. The Information Bureau also offered tours of the *News* plant and provided reprints of some of the paper's popular features at cost (for example, recipe booklets and dress patterns). On a sample week in May 1946, the Bureau fielded 5,943 phone calls and had 3,413 in-person visitors. The most frequent requests for information in early 1946 had to do with military enlistment, weather, and travel. During World War II, the *Daily News* created a new branch of the Information Bureau specifically for military personnel: the Service Men's Service. The paper also sponsored several high-profile amateur athletic events, most notably the Golden Gloves boxing tournament, the Silver Skates ice skating contest, and the Harvest Moon Ball dance competition (all held in Madison Square Garden with proceeds going to charity).⁸⁰ These activities helped to create a community with the *Daily News* at its center. The paper's management recognized this and emphasized it in a promotional narrative distributed to advertisers: "Our paper and its manifold services ... keep us in close touch with our readers and at the same time provide a city-wide community service center in this city of nearly 8,000,000 people.... The *News* is, in many ways, a community center as a result of our many reader and public services carried on consistently throughout the years."⁸¹

But the *Daily News* aimed to be more than simply an information clearinghouse or service provider. It embraced the nickname "the Tiger Paper," vowing in an editorial on the occasion of its fiftieth birthday "to fight like a tiger ... for the best interests of the whole gigantic New York metropolitan area."⁸² Indeed, this attitude came through in the most famous headline in the history of the *Daily News*, regarding President Gerald Ford's promise to veto any bill using federal funds to address New York's financial crisis: "Ford to City: Drop Dead."⁸³ A commitment to fighting for New Yorkers' interests also dictated the paper's news coverage in the mid-twentieth century; housing, transit, and other quality-of-life issues were major areas of focus. People wanted affordable rent, a reliable subway, and clean, safe streets. The *Daily News* advocated for those goals, but with a conservative twist: ease restrictions on development, let the police do as they please, and invite private enterprise to provide some city services—and of course, do not raise taxes (the *News*'s editorials fixated on legalized gambling as the way to fill municipal coffers instead of taxation).

As a result, some readers looked to the *Daily News* as a protector and sought the paper's help in resolving the everyday problems they encountered.⁸⁴ Among the few letters from readers in

⁷⁸Neil Harris, "Covering New York: Journalism and Civic Identity in the Twentieth Century," in *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930*, eds. Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske (New York, 1994), 262.

⁷⁹Stevens, *Sensationalism and the New York Press*, 130.

⁸⁰"Notes on the New York News" (promotional material prepared for advertisers), June 15, 1952, folder 13, box 33, Patterson Papers; Sheets labeled "Information Bureau" and "Information Bureau Activities," 1945–1946, folder 7, box 34, Patterson Papers.

⁸¹"Notes on the New York News" (promotional material prepared for advertisers), June 15, 1952, folder 13, box 33, Patterson Papers.

⁸²"The News at 50," *New York Daily News*, June 26, 1969, 57.

⁸³"Ford to City: Drop Dead," *New York Daily News*, Oct. 30, 1975, 1.

⁸⁴As Julia Guarneri has noted, readers interacted with the *New York World* in the same way in the late nineteenth century. Guarneri, *Newsprint Metropolis*, 107.

the 1950s and 1960s that made their way into archives, this is a common theme. One woman in 1967 wrote to the paper about a rodent infestation in her “middle-income development” in Bayside, Queens. The Board of Health and the mayor’s office had failed to assist her and her neighbors. “We hope you will take a little interest in our behalf, maybe you can help us,” she said.⁸⁵ In 1959, a reader wrote in to complain that a street vendor near his office—“a Chinaman of the Old School, a gracious and intelligent old man”—was being chased away by “a vicious type of Italian peddler who stationed his ‘good humor’ cart at the same location.” The reader asked, “Could you possibly have one of your reporters investigate?” This reader, like many others, had no compunction about referencing racial stereotypes. Elsewhere in his letter, he expressed his displeasure that an African American had been appointed to head the city’s welfare agency, noting, “the American Negro has become vulnerable to the blandishments of Communist Agents, who have stirred up racial antagonisms for their own political advantages, and with many communists already acting as investigators for the Welfare Department, the possible addition of discontented negro investigators would further prejudice the distribution of relief.”⁸⁶

The Welfare Department was on this reader’s mind, no doubt, because it had been the subject of a months-long investigative series in the *Daily News* several months earlier. Reporter Theo Wilson exposed rampant abuses in the programs meant to aid needy families. Her articles focused primarily on people defrauding the welfare system to get money they were not entitled to—“chiselers,” as the paper called them (a banner headline on the first article in the series declared, “Chiselers Get Half of Welfare Gravy”⁸⁷). This topic suited the *Daily News* perfectly: it showed how the hard-working taxpayers were being ripped off and implied that coddled bureaucrats enabled the fraud. The initial three-part series generated an enormous response—an estimated 2,500 letters and 5,000 phone calls to the *News* offices.⁸⁸

Racist stories about welfare cheats became central to right-wing discourse in later decades. Ronald Reagan, although he did not explicitly mention the race of the welfare recipients he was describing, famously referred to a “strapping young buck” using food stamps to buy T-bone steaks and helped create the image of the “welfare queen” in speeches about a woman who used multiple identities to bilk the government out of aid money.⁸⁹ The series in the *Daily News*, however, did not focus disproportionately on racial minorities as welfare abusers, although as one article noted, 83 percent of those enrolled in the Aid to Dependent Children program (the largest program in the Welfare Department) were “Negroes and Puerto Ricans.”⁹⁰ But it is unlikely that the *News* was making an effort to avoid discrimination. To expose welfare cheats, the *News* relied on tips from readers and informants who trusted the paper. Those people were overwhelmingly white, and given the degree of residential segregation in New York, their neighbors and acquaintances—the people whose fraud they might expose—also would have been overwhelming white (alternatively, it may be that although non-whites were more likely to be on the welfare rolls, whites were more likely to commit fraud).

But racism certainly hovered around the *Daily News*’s welfare investigation. The hero of the story, according to the *News*, was a Welfare Department investigator named Domenick Rainone. Articles in the news pages lauded Rainone for exposing fraud, and two editorials

⁸⁵Mrs. George Mas to Theo Wilson, Nov. 27, 1967, folder 51, Wilson Papers.

⁸⁶A. E. Budell, letter to the editor, New York *Daily News*, Aug. 24, 1959, folder 377, Wilson Papers.

⁸⁷Theo Wilson, “Chiselers Get Half of What We Pay to Help the Needy,” New York *Daily News*, Sept. 22, 1958, 2. The headline after the “jump” (continuation) refers to “welfare gravy.”

⁸⁸“2 New York Papers Exposing School Morale, Welfare Rackets,” *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 29, 1958, p. 9, folder 79, Wilson Papers.

⁸⁹Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (New York, 2015), 58–9.

⁹⁰Theo Wilson, “ADC: Child That Grew Up to a Monster,” New York *Daily News*, Sept. 24, 1958, 28.

called for him to be named the department's deputy commissioner.⁹¹ However, the *News* declined to report that Rainone was accused of "extreme racial prejudice" by the head of the NAACP, Roy Wilkins. Wilkins sent a letter to New York City's mayor and to the Commissioner of Investigations alleging that, among other things, Rainone "branded all Puerto Rican and Negro women on the city's relief rolls as 'prostitutes and whores'" and "boasted of his part in forcing a Negro family to move from a previously all-white neighborhood near his home in Brooklyn."⁹² This was reported in the liberal tabloid the *New York Post* and in the African-American weekly *New York Amsterdam News*, but no mention of it appeared in the *Daily News*—although the accusation may have contributed to Rainone's temporary transfer out of the fraud department in April 1959.

Coverage in the *Daily News* rarely displayed the virulent racism commonplace in many Southern newspapers, but the paper was not intended for Black readers. Like many newspapers in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the *Daily News* identified the race of suspects in crime stories, but only if they were non-white—a practice that perpetuated the notion that African Americans were prone to criminality.⁹³ Unlike many newspapers, the *News* was sympathetic to the apartheid regime in South Africa well into the 1960s.⁹⁴ And the paper allowed the free expression of racism in the Voice of the People section. For example, in the aftermath of a 1959 lynching in Mississippi that made national headlines, a reader who signed her letter "A Southern Lady" wrote that "the people gave a dirty, sexed-up nigger just what he deserved" and that "lynching was too good" for the victim (an accused rapist). "To consider himself really 'living,'" she wrote, "a nigger wants only two things—a big car and a white woman.... I hope that when they found him they had to pick up his remains with a shovel."⁹⁵

This was an extreme example, but the letters the *Daily News* selected to represent the "Voice of the People" often expressed a wariness or resentment of non-whites, especially African Americans. Two letters published on the same day in 1965 are more characteristic of "Voice" content than the letter applauding a lynching. One argued against affirmative action in government hiring, saying no jobs should be "earmarked" for Blacks unless there were also jobs earmarked for whites. Another objected to a New York State measure to promote mixed-income housing by suggesting sarcastically, "Why stop at half-measures? Why not move impoverished Negro and Puerto Rican clans to Fifth Avenue luxury apartments to live with the Rockefellers and other gilt-edged liberals? Surely the liberal elite of Westchester and Long Island's North Shore ought to practice what they preach."⁹⁶ These letter writers do not express visceral hatred, but rather a desire to preserve their own semi-privileged status and a disdain for hypocritical elites who do not seem to care about them (as the old *Daily News* slogan put it, the Stuyvesants took care of themselves).

⁹¹"Relief Gyp Nemesis Rainone Discharged," *New York Daily News*, Apr. 10, 1959, 2; Theo Wilson, "Drive Grows to Put Rainone 2d in Command of Welfare," *New York Daily News*, July 29, 1959, 25; "Sharkey Asks Mayor to Hire Rainone," *New York Daily News*, Aug. 19, 1959, 14; "Welfare Needs This Man," *New York Daily News*, Aug. 7, 1959, 27; "Chiselers, Beware," *New York Daily News*, Sept. 23, 1959, 43.

⁹²Ted Poston, "Charge Welfare Aide Vented Racial Hatred" (with handwritten notation "RED PRESS"), *New York Post*, Feb. 12, 1959, folder 388, Wilson Papers. "Investigate Investigator," *New York Amsterdam News*, Feb. 21, 1959, 34.

⁹³For instance, see two articles on page 3 of the *New York Daily News* on June 22, 1951: "Seize Hospital Pair as Sellers of Dope" ("The two men, Albert Jones, 25, and John Cauthen, 30, both Negroes, were arrested in their apartment ...") and "Reds in Bail Scrap, But 14 Stay in Jail" ("The four indicted men still being sought are James E. Jackson, 36, Negro, the party's southern regional director ...").

⁹⁴For instance, see the following *Daily News* editorials: "More Trouble for Africa," May 31, 1961, 47; "And Now, About Cuba," Dec. 6, 1963, 53; and "South African Challenge," Apr. 3, 1965, 17.

⁹⁵"Voice of the People," *New York Daily News*, May 6, 1959, 37.

⁹⁶"Voice of the People," *New York Daily News*, Mar. 8, 1965, 29.

This, too, was part of the way that the *Daily News* formed an imagined community: by denigrating those outside of the community and depicting them as an “other” to be scorned or feared. As with most populist discourses, the *News* employed an “us versus them” framing, and the “them” consisted not only of left-wingers and elites but also of racial and ethnic minorities. Unsurprisingly given its isolationist and ethnonationalist outlook, the *Daily News* occasionally became a forum for anti-Semitism, especially during the 1940s. Although Patterson did not formally join the America First Committee, he donated \$4,000 to the group and oversaw editorials that defended America First from accusations of anti-Semitism (one editorial bemoaned “violent efforts” by “the more enthusiastic warmongers” to “hang an anti-Semitic label on all who oppose sending millions of young Americans, Jews and Gentiles alike, overseas to settle another of Europe’s wars”).⁹⁷ Other editorials suggested that Jews were responsible for the United States’s involvement in World War II, using the sly propaganda technique of repeating a slander and then disavowing it in very weak terms. A 1947 *New Yorker* profile of the paper’s lead editorial writer, Reuben Maury, cited three editorials that noted how some blamed Jews but hastily added that the *News* disagreed.⁹⁸ In 1941, for example, before the United States entered the war, an editorial stated, “Well, we think we’re being pushed into this war all right, against the wishes of most of us. But we think Lindbergh is mistaken in saying the Jews are a major factor in pushing us in.”⁹⁹

Once the United States entered the war, Patterson and the *Daily News* editorial page grudgingly supported the effort, but Jewish communities remained bitterly antagonistic toward the paper. *News* representatives conducting a poll regarding voters’ choices in the 1942 New York State elections reported that in Jewish neighborhoods in Brooklyn, children “would often swarm around the car and pass remarks referring to The News as a Fascist and Nazi paper.” Another pollster said that in “the strong Jewish sections” of the Bronx, “it was the customary thing to have young kids shout at us. They said, ‘There goes the Nazi News,’ and other remarks along the same line.”¹⁰⁰

The *Daily News* deepened its reputation for anti-Semitism shortly after the war ended, with an incendiary article by John O’Donnell. On October 3, 1945, O’Donnell’s Capitol Stuff column concerned the decision to remove General George S. Patton from his command in Germany. O’Donnell alleged that the move was engineered by “the secret and astoundingly effective might of this republic’s foreign-born political leaders—such as Justice of the Supreme Court Felix Frankfurter, of Vienna, White House administrative assistant Dave (devious Dave) Niles alias Neyhus and the Latvian ex-rabbinical student now known as Sidney Hillman” (the prominent labor leader who helped found the CIO). O’Donnell went on to claim that the shell-shocked soldier whom Patton famously slapped in an army hospital in Italy in 1943 (drawing a reprimand from his superior, General Dwight Eisenhower) was Jewish, and that Patton had made “a direct reference to the patient’s racial background” while berating the man.¹⁰¹ The implication was that powerful Jews in Washington had conspired to take down one of the country’s most admired military leaders because he had insulted a Jewish soldier.

This column generated a slew of angry letters. In fact, the soldier Patton had assaulted was not Jewish—as several Jewish leaders noted in a letter to the editor (published in the *Daily News* on October 6) that called the column “as flagrantly anti-Semitic as anything which has

⁹⁷J. M. Patterson to Robert E. Wood, Oct. 17, 1941; Robert S. Bliss to J. M. Patterson, Oct. 6, 1941 and Edwin S. Webster to J. M. Patterson, Oct. 23, 1941, folder 2, box 28, Patterson Papers; “What Is Anti-Semitism?” *New York Daily News*, Sept. 10, 1941, 31.

⁹⁸John Bainbridge, “Profiles: Editorial Writer,” Part 2 of 3, *New Yorker*, May 31, 1947, 39–40.

⁹⁹“Conversation Piece,” *New York Daily News*, Sept. 18, 1941, 31.

¹⁰⁰Robert Conway to Mr. Fritzingler, memo regarding “ANTI-NEWS Sentiment,” Nov. 5, 1942, folder 1, box 29, Patterson Papers.

¹⁰¹John O’Donnell, “Capitol Stuff,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 3, 1945, 4.

ever appeared in a metropolitan newspaper.”¹⁰² However, the *Daily News* did not issue a correction until more than two weeks after the article’s publication. The correction acknowledged that the slapped soldier was Christian and noted the denials of Niles, Hillman, and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau (another Jew named as part of the conspiracy in O’Donnell’s column) that they had anything to do with Patton’s transfer.¹⁰³ But there was no apology for the insinuation that these Jews in government formed a sinister cabal, or for suggesting that Niles and Hillman had deviously tried to mask their Jewish background by anglicizing their names—both common anti-Semitic tropes. The B’Nai Brith organization issued a resolution condemning the *Daily News* and joined with the Anti-Defamation League to produce circulars and flyers denouncing the paper. The flyers featured mock newspaper covers titled “Daily Noose” and included an open letter to Patterson warning him not to “become a cheap imitation of Hitler and attempt to foment racial and religious strife.”¹⁰⁴

In the ethnonationalism of the *Daily News*, Jews and non-whites stood outside the “us” who made up the American nation. So too did Asians. Most of the American press demonized and dehumanized the Japanese during World War II, but few went so far as to call for the use of poison gas against them, as did a *Daily News* editorial headlined “Give Our Boys a Break—Gas the Japs.”¹⁰⁵ Editorials showed disdain for other Asian nationalities. One in 1936 referred to “a couple of Chinamen—pardon, Chinese—named Chang and Chiang,” showing a determination to use an offensive term although (or because) the writer knew it to be offensive.¹⁰⁶ Editorials during the war mentioned “yellow hordes” from Asia threatening to overrun the white populations of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. The *News* roundly rejected the idea of defending India, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, but despite its isolationist perspective, said the United States should consider “trying to save Australia and New Zealand for the white race.”¹⁰⁷ And although China was an American ally in wartime, the *Daily News* argued (unsuccessfully) against the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943. “The Chinese workman can, or does, work harder and longer and live on less pay and food than does the American workman,” said an editorial. Chinese workers, the *News* warned, represented a “danger ... to American living standards”; to let them in would be to “give away our country.”¹⁰⁸

The *Daily News* framed this restrictionist stance on immigration, like most of the policies it advocated, as simply a matter of looking out for one’s self-interest. Arguing against raising immigration quotas after the war, an editorial declared, “You can call it selfish for Americans thus to be unwilling to share this country with unlimited numbers of newcomers. But it is no more selfish than for foreigners to want to stream here in millions, share our comparative wealth, and pull down our standard of living.”¹⁰⁹ The message regarding immigrants mirrored the message regarding elites, gays, Jews, Blacks, and others: they are not part of our group and they intend to take or give away what is rightfully ours.

Many populist politicians of the post-World War II years used similar appeals to the economic self-interest of working-class and middle-class whites. As Timothy Lombardo notes in his study of Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo, a central aspect of Rizzo’s allure was that white ethnics viewed him as “one of us.” Like the *Daily News*, Rizzo emphasized toughness and masculinity

¹⁰²“Voice of the People—O’Donnell Column Denied,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 6, 1945, 11.

¹⁰³John O’Donnell, “Capitol Stuff,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 19, 1945, 4.

¹⁰⁴Anti-*Daily News* pamphlets and flyers, undated, folder 10, box 36, Patterson Papers.

¹⁰⁵“Give Our Boys a Break—Gas the Japs,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 6, 1945, 15.

¹⁰⁶“Wally and Windsor,” *New York Daily News*, Dec. 19, 1936, 19.

¹⁰⁷“What Is Our Far East Policy?,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 28, 1940, 23; “Passing of the Great Race?,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 24, 1941, 19. The latter editorial praised the work of eugenicist Madison Grant and warned that Europe was committing “racial suicide.”

¹⁰⁸“Chinese Exclusion Act—Why Repeal It?,” *New York Daily News*, Aug. 20, 1943, 19.

¹⁰⁹“Lots of People Want In,” *New York Daily News*, Dec. 19, 1945, 31.

in his populist messaging. Sometimes he opportunistically coupled this with sops to white supremacy, as when Rizzo had members of the Black Panther Party strip-searched and photographed naked.¹¹⁰ However, Lombardo argues that racial animus was not the prime contributor to Rizzo's popularity—rather, status anxiety and economic self-interest motivated blue-collar whites to support the conservative populist mayor. Kenneth Durr makes a similar argument in his study of white working-class Baltimore in the mid-twentieth century.¹¹¹

The *Daily News* fits neatly into this paradigm. It appealed to its audience on the basis of shared white identity but emphasized ideological and class-based issues more than racial ones. However, one cannot simply separate economic anxiety from racism among Frank Rizzo's supporters, Kenneth Durr's Baltimoreans, and the readers of the *Daily News* in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, some may have opposed integrated neighborhoods primarily because they hated the thought of having Blacks as neighbors, while others opposed it primarily because they thought it would cause their home's value to plummet, but ultimately all the reasons were braided together. Race-based messages and economic messages seem to have been equally effective.

As for the *Daily News*, its message—especially on the editorial page—still aimed at the mythical Sweeney, the white ethnic wage earner with traditionalist values. By the late 1960s, however, the paper fell into decline. It was still highly profitable, and it would remain the country's circulation leader for years to come, but its readership and revenue steadily shrank. In 1969, the headline of an article in *New York* magazine asked if a new editor could “save the *Daily News*.” A newspaper-industry expert quoted in the article diagnosed the problem:

In New York today, the readers to whom the *Daily News* has been directing itself are diminishing.... The little working guys with their lunchpails have disappeared.... The little guy in the American legion hat who buys a six-pack once a week and his wife who sends away for those 35-cent dress patterns the paper promotes are not the kind of readers who attract advertisers. There's no money in senior citizens, and the newspaper's antediluvian editorials—which are fun to read—aren't really talking to anyone anymore. Certainly not in New York City, for heaven-sake—a labor town, with a liberal majority and an increasing black and Puerto Rican constituency.¹¹²

The circulation manager of the *Daily News*, Jack Underwood, had a similar, but simpler explanation. The paper was still operating on the principle of “tell it to Sweeney,” Underwood said to a *Wall Street Journal* reporter in 1967. “The trouble is there are fewer Sweeneys around to tell it to.”¹¹³

However, the Sweeneys did not disappear; they dispersed, and their media consumption habits changed. They moved to the suburbs and exurbs, and many stopped buying newspapers.¹¹⁴ Later generations of Sweeneys would become the prime demographic for other highly successful forms of populist, conservative media: talk radio and Fox News. Those outlets employed many of the same techniques that the *Daily News* used to great effect in its heyday. Conservative talk radio hosts, as Brian Rosenwald notes, aim primarily to entertain their

¹¹⁰Lombardo, *Blue-Collar Conservatism*, 135–64.

¹¹¹Durr, *Behind the Backlash*, 3.

¹¹²Nicholas Pileggi, “Can Mike O’Neill Save the ‘Daily News’?,” *New York*, Feb. 3, 1969, 40–3, here 42.

¹¹³MacDougall, “It’s Sensational!,” 1.

¹¹⁴Overall newspaper circulation in the U.S. declined substantially in the U.S. during the 1970s and 1980s, but the decline was most pronounced among people with lower levels of education and in blue-collar occupations. Jeff Sobal and Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, “Newspaper Non-Readers: A National Profile,” *Journalism Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1981): 9–13; Judee K. Burgoon and Michael Burgoon, “Predictors of Newspaper Readership,” *Journalism Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1980): 589–96; Laurence B. Lain, “More Evidence on the Needs of Readers,” *Newspaper Research Journal* 6, no. 4 (1985): 8–18.

audience, rather than treating politics as serious business—and like the *Daily News*, they delight in pushing the boundaries of acceptable discourse or “political correctness,” mainly when mocking political opponents or out groups.¹¹⁵ Fox News conveys a message, that, in the words of Reece Peck, “‘over-educated elites’ use government power to both expropriate the wealth of ‘producing’ Americans and impose non-traditional cultural values on them”—nearly identical to the message of the mid-century *Daily News*.¹¹⁶ Peck notes that “working-class styles of masculinity and melodramatic narrative structures of tabloid newspapers” influenced both talk radio and Fox News, and that the ascendance of “middlebrow” news products like the broadcast networks’ evening news programs “created a vacuum for a cultural populist brand of journalism.”¹¹⁷ That vacuum was also the result of the *Daily News*’s decline and leftward shift, along with that of publications like *Reader’s Digest*, the Hearst newspapers, and the *Chicago Tribune* (which did not experience a major decline in the twentieth century but did shift leftward).

Whereas today’s conservative media undoubtedly exert a tremendous influence on voting behavior and public policy, the political influence of the *Daily News* and other conservative mass-circulation outlets in the mid-twentieth century is harder to assess. To be sure, *Daily News* investigations and exposés produced results. For example, the 1958 series on welfare fraud prompted a burst of official responses to address the problem, as did a 1969 series on failures at New York City’s Department of Sanitation.¹¹⁸ But evidence for the effectiveness of the paper’s editorial positions and crusades is hard to find.

The best case for the *Daily News*’s ability to sway elections comes from New York’s 1950 mayoral race, when the paper endorsed the third-party candidate Vincent Impellitteri. Impellitteri had been city council president and ascended to the position of acting mayor when William O’Dwyer resigned in September 1950 due to a corruption scandal. After Impellitteri failed to win the Democratic Party nomination, he decided to run under the banner of the Experience party, positioning himself as anti-Tammany Hall (the Democratic machine that had blocked his nomination).¹¹⁹ The *News* published several editorials supporting “Impy,” as they nicknamed him, as well as a large illustration showing readers exactly where his name would appear on the ballot.¹²⁰ When the *News* published the results of a straw poll it conducted showing Impellitteri likely to win handily, his Democratic rival Ferdinand Pecora protested that the poll was rigged to support the paper’s preferred candidate. A *Daily News* editorial made hay of this, challenging Pecora to bet \$10,000 that their poll was wrong (Pecora did not take the bet, but the *News* got excellent publicity).¹²¹

¹¹⁵Rosenwald, *Talk Radio’s America*, 34–8.

¹¹⁶Peck, *Fox Populism*, 4.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 65–7.

¹¹⁸In the wake of the welfare series, the Brooklyn grand jury investigating welfare fraud had its term extended, Mayor Robert Wagner created a committee to investigate the issue, and the New York state legislature held public hearings. See Theo Wilson, “Hear Ye: Welfare Hearing Is Set & Taxpayers Invited,” *New York Daily News*, Jan. 17, 1959, 4; Edward Kirkman and Theo Wilson, “Wagner Relief Study Sniffs at Residence Law,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 3, 1959, 6; and “2 New York Papers Exposing School Morale, Welfare Rackets,” *Editor & Publisher*, Nov. 29, 1958, 9. The series on the garbage crisis ran from March 18–22, 1969. On the results, see Donald Singleton, “Lid’s Off and All Eyes Are on the Trash,” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 22, 1969, 3; Donald Singleton, “Quick as a Flash, Away Goes Trash!” *New York Daily News*, Mar. 23, 1969, 3.

¹¹⁹Robert D. McFadden, “Vincent Impellitteri Is Dead; Mayor of New York in 1950’s,” *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1987, B8.

¹²⁰“Impy’s Stock Looking Up,” *New York Daily News*, Sept. 22, 1950, 47; “Impy Still Doing Fine, Thanks,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 6, 1950, 47; Robert Dwyer and Neal Patterson, “Impy’s Ballot Spot: Plus or Minus?” *New York Daily News*, Nov. 3, 1950, 6.

¹²¹“Put Up 10,000 Skins or Shut Up, Judge,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 28, 1950, 17; “N.Y. Paper Offers \$10,000 Bet Its Election Poll Is Accurate,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 28, 1950, 11.

The *Daily News* straw poll turned out to be largely accurate, as “Impy” defeated Pecora by more than 8 percentage points (although the poll had predicted a larger margin for Impellitteri).¹²² A post-election editorial praised the voters’ “ability to think and act on their own” in choosing the third-party candidate, but the *News* indulged in some self-congratulation by publishing, as the first letter in that day’s Voice of the People section, a note from a reader saying, “Congratulations on your News poll and Impellitteri’s victory. It was your publicity that carried the mayor.”¹²³ In private, *Daily News* publisher F. M. Flynn was much more boastful. Giving a speech to the *Daily News* advertising department describing the paper’s recent successes, Flynn said, “Probably the most outstanding achievement during the year was the almost single-handed job of electing Mayor Impellitteri.”¹²⁴

Flynn claiming credit for Impellitteri’s victory would be more believable, though, if the *Daily News* had repeated the feat of getting its preferred mayoral candidate elected. The man the *News* endorsed in the subsequent election, Republican Harold Riegelman, received only 30 percent of the vote.¹²⁵ And the paper’s years of opposition to Fiorello La Guardia did not prevent him from winning three mayoral elections comfortably (the *News* did not make an endorsement in the mayoral elections of 1945 or 1949, both of which William O’Dwyer won). Apart from political endorsements, other measures the *News* editorial page supported—for example, a national lottery and legalized gambling as alternatives to high taxation—were not enacted for many years despite the paper’s best efforts. The conventional wisdom during the heyday of the *News* held that despite its massive circulation, it had little political influence. Even the paper’s own journalists often felt this way. In an oral history interview, the longtime Washington correspondent Frank Holeman, after explaining that the *Daily News* had the highest circulation in the country, was asked, “So you had some influence?” He responded, “No, no influence,” adding, “Nobody liked the News except the goddamn readers. Politicians didn’t pay any attention to it.”¹²⁶ But even if the *Daily News* had little influence on elections or public policy at the time, it surely helped shape and reinforce the worldview of its readers. It tapped into deep veins of populism and ethnonationalism that have long been powerful forces in American politics.

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¹²²James Desmond, “Poll Picked Exact Finish Order, But Impy Was Put Too High,” *New York Daily News*, Nov. 9, 1950, 2.

¹²³“The Winners Here” and “Voice of the People,” *New York Daily News*, Nov. 9, 1950, 49.

¹²⁴F. M. Flynn’s Speech at Advertising Dinner,” from *News Pix*, Jan. 1951, p. 14, folder 75, Flynn Papers.

¹²⁵“For Mayor: Harold Riegelman,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 16, 1953, 39.

¹²⁶Frank Holeman, interview by Niel M. Johnson, June 9, 1987, transcript, p. 62, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/holeman> (accessed Feb. 20, 2021). Holeman was Washington correspondent for the *Daily News* from 1946 to 1965.