Challenging Corporate Polluters: Race, Class, and Environmental Politics in Gary, Indiana, since 1945

*Andrew Hurley**

Buoyed by a groundswell of popular support the American environmental movement reached its zenith between 1969 and 1972. Environmental organizations scored unprecedented membership gains, the nation celebrated Earth Day, and in a series of battles over industrial development projects, citizens squared off against private businesses in state and local legislatures, in court, and on construction sites.[1] Amidst the burst of activity, an unusual incident occurred in Gary, Indiana. On the evening of December 15, 1970, as the Gary city council met to consider an amendment to the municipal air pollution ordinance, 350 citizens jammed the council chambers. Affluent whites, blue-collar steelworkers, and black youths showed up to vent their wrath against the city's major polluter, the US Steel Corporation. The citizens of Gary had joined forces in support of an aggressive anti-pollution program orchestrated by Richard Hatcher, the city's first African-American mayor. The specific legislation in question was a bill that would, for the first time, force US Steel to curb air emissions from its coking ovens. Reflecting widespread popular approval, public testimony overwhelmingly favored the bill; only the steel company representative argued against its passage.[2] In this battle over coke oven emissions, the people of Gary transcended racial and class lines to stand together against corporate pollution and power.

[1] Walter A. Rosenbaum, *The Politics of Environmental Concern* (2nd ed., New York, 1977). Also see Thomas N. Gladwin, "Patterns of Environmental Conflict Over Industrial Facilities in the United States," *Natural Resources Journal*, XX (April, 1980), 258-62.

[2] Phil Starr, formerly with VISTA, telephone interview with author, Cleveland, Ohio, February 9, 1987; Gary *Post-Tribune*, December 16, 1970, p. 1.

The presence of both blacks and working-class whites in this gathering contradicts conventional assumptions about the social composition of the environmental movement in post-World War II America. Scholars have overlooked the roles played by African Americans and industrial workers in the push for cleaner air, fresher water, and wilderness preservation. Indeed, ample evidence supports the notion that environmental activism was a white, middle-class affair. Through the 1960s, well-educated, upper-income suburbanites in white-collar professions filled the ranks of important environmental organizations; public opinion polls showed that they also provided the most consistent support for environmental reform.[3] Samuel Hays, in the most sophisticated analysis of environmentalism's social roots, offered an explanation for this social bias by linking environmental values with a growing concern among well-to-do Americans for the quality of life and the quest for amenities. According to Hays, widespread prosperity in the decades following World War II inspired many people to adopt a new set of priorities: maintaining good health, living amidst pleasant surroundings, devoting time to leisure activities, and improving the quality of life. Industrial pollution elicited wrath because it interfered with the pursuit of these amenities.[4] For Hays then, the rise of environmentalism was associated with habits and an outlook that developed along with post-World War II prosperity.[5]

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[3] Charles O. Jones, *Clean Air: The Policies and Politics of Pollution Control* (Pittsburgh, 1975), 140-54. For statistical evidence pointing to the preponderance of suburban, middle-class Americans among proponents of environmental reform see, Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: Pollution and its Costs," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XXXVI (Spring, 1972), 120-35; J. Clarence Davies III, *The Politics of Pollution* (New York, 1970), 80.

[4] Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955–1985* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987). Interpretations of recent African-American history complement the conclusions that whites dominated the environmental movement. According to some historians, the late 1960s witnessed a collapse of political alliances between whites and blacks. Black activists rejected the integrationist civil rights agenda in favor of a separatist black power movement. Especially in northern cities, blacks summoned political strength within their communities to attack poor housing conditions, eradicate poverty, and shatter the wall of white authority in school systems, police departments, and welfare agencies. Environmental quality ranked relatively low on their agenda. As the struggle for racial advancement moved north, white liberals became alarmed at rising black militancy and withdrew their active support. Thus, not only did blacks and whites split on the priority accorded to environmental reform, but they demonstrated little willingness to cooperate in the political arena. See, for example, Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954–1980* (New York, 1981), 167-237; Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington, 1987), 186-213; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (3rd ed., New York, 1976), 308-13.

[5] Some authors have used the affluent base of environmentalism as the basis for critiques of the movement, arguing that the environmental movement represented an attempt by elites to protect their privileges from the incursions of the poor and racial minorities. See William C. Tucker, *Progress and Privilege: America in the Age of Environmentalism* (Garden City, N.Y., 1982); Aaron Wildavsky, "Aes-

The inclusion of African Americans and working-class whites in Gary's environmental crusade suggests the need for a deeper analysis of environmentalism's political dynamics, one that accounts for alternate social configurations. The conditions prompting minorities and the working-class to participate in environmental activism may be understood by expanding the scope of inquiry and locating the environmental movement within broader political currents. Taking this approach, David Vogel insisted that the environmental movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s drew its strength from a much broader political offensive against big business. Corporate backing for the Vietnam War and racial segregation earlier in the decade incensed many Americans and, according to Vogel, prompted them to scrutinize corporate behavior on other "public interest" issues such as consumer safety, public health, and eventually the environment. Hence, the most salient feature of environmental reform was its assault on corporate prerogatives. Amendments to the Clean Air Act (1970) and Clean Water Act (1972) mandated that industries clean up their waste emissions, regardless of cost, by establishing stringent air and water quality standards along with deadlines for compliance. Vogel's analysis demonstrated that the political success of environmentalism was not solely a product of a growing concern for environmental quality but was related to a more generalized frustration with corporate behavior. Still, Vogel located the source of the anti-corporate crusade among well-educated, affluent Americans who were skeptical of all large centralized institutions.[6]

Yet it was precisely by articulating the pollution problem as a reflection of corporate exploitation that Richard Hatcher fashioned a socially inclusive environmental coalition in Gary. If it is surprising that blacks and working-class whites participated in a campaign to curb industrial emissions, it is only because historians have overlooked fundamental commonalities between the environmental movement and the political initiatives of lower-income groups in urban society during the 1960s. At the same time that

thetic Power or the Triumph of the Sensitive Minority Over the Vulgar Mass: A Political Analysis of the New Economics," in *America's Changing Environment*, ed. Roger Revelle and Hans H. Landsberg (Boston, 1970), 156. For exceptional treatments that emphasize the broad base of environmental support see Richard Kazis and Richard L. Grossman, *Fear at Work: Job Blackmail, Labor and the Environment* (New York, 1982); Richard N. L. Andrews, "Class Politics or Democratic Reform: Environmentalism and American Political Institutions," *Natural Resources Journal*, XX (April, 1980), 221-42; and Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* (Boulder, Colo., 1990), 14, 35, 100.

[6] David Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America* (New York, 1989), 37-100; David Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation: Citizen Challenges to Business Authority* (New York, 1978), 21-68. Also see Robert L. Rabin, "Federal Regulation in Historical Perspective," *Stanford Law Review*, XXXVIII (May, 1986), 1189-1326.

middle-class whites took manufacturers to task for fouling the air and producing shoddy products, minorities and the poor waged their own battles against urban renewal projects and racial discrimination in both public and private institutions. What all these agitators shared was a basic rejection of political structures that accorded highest priority to business interests. The political turbulence of the 1960s, or more precisely, the weakening of growth-oriented political regimes, created opportunities for the construction of alliances among the newly mobilized groups. In Gary these energies found a focus in a movement to curb industrial pollution.

Gary's example is instructive in that for much of the post-World War II period, the city's environmental movement conformed to the stereotypical portrait. From 1945 until 1967, affluent whites dominated campaigns to reduce industrial pollution. During this early phase of environmental reform, civic leaders cooperated with US Steel in formulating an air pollution ordinance that made minimal incursions into industrial production. In the late 1960s the situation changed. An explosion of racial tensions called existing political and social affiliations into question. Mayor Hatcher saw this social and political crisis as an opportunity to restructure the public agenda. He did so by joining two converging forces: the drive for greater community power as defined by blacks and working-class whites and a rising concern for the quality of residential life that took hold most firmly among affluent whites. Fusing environmental concerns with popular resentment toward US Steel, Hatcher initiated a drive to impose strict regulations on corporate polluters and, in the process, stimulated the formation of a multi-class and multi-racial environmental coalition. Thus, the transformation of environmental politics in Gary during the late 1960s demonstrates how it was possible to expand the movement's popular base by placing environmental reform in a broader political context, in this case, an assessment of the role of the corporation in the community. This article will describe the shift in environmental politics, uncover the social and political developments that precipitated the transformation, and suggest the degree to which the social composition of the environmental movement has influenced its character and effectiveness.

From its beginnings in 1906, Gary was an industrial city; environmental conditions and social arrangements flowed from the dictates of steel production. With the purchase of 9,000 acres of property along the shore of Lake Michigan, US Steel turned a wilderness area into an industrial city.[7] Gary's steel mills spewed

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[7] Powell A. Moore, *The Calumet Region: Indiana's Last Frontier* (Indianapolis, 1959), 275-76; Edward Greer, *Big Steel: Black Politics and Corporate Power in Gary, Indiana* (New York, 1979), 57-61; United States Steel Corporation, *Gary Steel Works 50th Anniversary* (Gary, 1956), 7-8, box 1, US Steel Corporation Collection (Calumet Regional Archives, Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana).

RICHARD HATCHER DURING
1967 ELECTION

industrial wastes across the urban landscape. In the years just af-
ter World War II, when production boomed, US Steel released over
two hundred fifty tons of pollutants into the atmosphere annually
and discharged three hundred million gallons of liquid waste into
Gary's waterways daily.[8] Although the arrival of an automobile
body parts manufacturer, an electric power utility, a paper mill,
and several chemical companies introduced additional wastes to
Gary's air and water in the 1950s, US Steel remained the primary
agent of environmental degradation.

Dirty air and water imposed inconvenience and health risks
on all Gary residents. Soot raining down from factory smokestacks
discouraged families from hanging their wash out to dry. Tap wa-
ter, full of floating metallic sediments, tasted bad. Recreational
and commercial fishermen complained that industrial sewage de-
pleted the fish population in the Grand Calumet River and Lake
Michigan. Human health suffered. Workers came home from the
steel mills coughing and wheezing, and in districts bordering the
factories infant mortality rates soared. Although exposure to
smoke varied according to where one lived and worked, industrial
pollution was sufficiently pervasive to intrude on the lives of all
Gary citizens.[9]

Industry exerted an equally powerful influence over Gary's so-
cial configuration. The patterns of labor recruitment at US Steel
created a class structure based on ethnic and racial divisions.
When the steel company commenced operations, immigrants from
southeastern Europe represented the most accessible source of
cheap labor. Following trends established in the steel industry
across the nation, Poles, Slovaks, Serbians, and Croatians filled
unskilled and semi-skilled jobs while a smaller number of men
with northern European backgrounds monopolized skilled and su-
pervisory positions. Beginning in World War I, mill management
recruited southern blacks as European migration to the United
States slowed. These African Americans, entering on the lowest
rungs of the occupational ladder, performed the most menial work
for the least pay. By 1945 blacks represented 27 percent of the

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[8] These figures are based on data compiled in the mid-1960s extrapolated down-
ward according to changes in output at Gary Works. U.S. Department of Health,
Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, *Air Pollutant Emission Inventory of
Northwest Indiana, A Preliminary Survey* (1966), 19; U.S. Department of Health,
Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, *Report on Pollution of the Waters of
the Grand Calumet River, Little Calumet River, Calumet River, Lake Michigan, Wolf
Lake and their Tributaries* (1965), 20.

[9] Gary *Post-Tribune*, January 4, 1949, press clipping collection (Gary Public
Library, Gary, Indiana); Fred Carr, commercial fisherman, interview with author,
Portage, Indiana, December 12, 1986. For a statistical analysis of infant mortality
see Andrew Hurley, "Environmental and Social Change in Gary, Indiana, 1945–
1980" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Northwestern University, 1988),
55.

Gary Works labor force and over 30 percent of the city's residential population.[10] Meanwhile, Gary's tight-knit ethnic communities continued to thrive. As late as 1957, immigrants and their children accounted for two out of five Gary citizens.[11] Although foreign-stock whites and blacks combined to form a working-class, job and housing competition generated animosity between the two groups. This hostility intensified after World War II as the steadily increasing black population pressed for access to housing, schools, and recreational facilities in white, working-class neighborhoods.

Although Gary remained a predominantly working-class city throughout the post-World II era, a growing number of more affluent residents set themselves apart by attaining such hallmarks of middle-class life as suburban residence and privately owned homes. Prior to World War II, only businesspersons and some white-collar employees, usually of northern European extraction, constructed their lives around middle-class norms. After 1945, affluence and consumerism usurped occupation and ethnic background as the most significant determinants of middle-class status, thereby broadening opportunities for social mobility.[12] For example, restrictions prohibiting Jews from moving into Gary's elite neighborhoods fell by the wayside in the 1950s.[13] The vitality of the steel industry and the economic gains of organized labor even allowed some industrial laborers to buy their way into the middle class. Reflecting these trends, home ownership rates in Gary jumped from 34 to 60 percent between 1940 and 1980.[14] At the same time, Gary's suburban fringe scored the largest gains in population.[15] Only African Americans, relegated to the lowest

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[10] Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States, Chicago, and the Calumet Region* (Berkeley, 1932), 42-43; Raymond Mohl and Neil Betten, *Steel City: Urban and Ethnic Patterns in Gary, Indiana, 1906–1950* (New York, 1986), 10-25; Edward Greer, "Racism and US Steel," *Radical America*, X (September–October, 1976), 45-68; J. Harvey Kerns, *A Study of Social and Economic Conditions of the Negro Population of Gary, Indiana* (New York, 1944), 31. For a discussion of national trends in the steel industry at the beginning of the twentieth century see David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era* (New York, 1960), 80-111.

[11] Phillips Cutwright, "Party Organization and Voting Behavior," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1960), 17. Evidence of strong ethnic attachments can be seen in post-World War II residential patterns. Working-class whites continued to cluster in relatively homogeneous ethnic neighborhoods. See U.S., *Seventeenth Census, 1950*: Vol. III, *Statistics for Census Tracts*, Chapter 10, 65-67.

[12] For a good discussion of the new middle class see Kenneth Fox, *Metropolitan America: Urban Life and Urban Policy in the United States, 1940–1980* (Jackson, Miss., 1986), 50-78. Also see, Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the Middle Class* (New York, 1990), 166-224.

[13] Charles Lazerwitz, realtor, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, November 17, 1986.

[14] U.S., *Sixteenth Census, 1940: Block Statistics*, 5. U.S., *Twentieth Census, 1980*: Vol. III, Chapter 10, *Statistics for Census Tracts*, H-4 through H-6.

[15] U.S., *Seventeenth Census, 1950: Statistics for Census Tracts, 190-193*. U.S., *Twentieth Census, 1980*: Vol. III, Chapter 10, *Statistics for Census Tracts*, P-4 through P-7.

rungs of the industrial hierarchy and subjugated to racial discrimination, faced rigid barriers to middle-class life.

It was among the members of this emergent middle-class, particularly professionals and homemakers, that environmental degradation first provoked a public outcry. With their suburban homes, high-incomes, and abundant leisure time, Gary's affluent residents conformed to the image of environmentalists depicted in much of the scholarly literature. It was industrial smoke, above all, that inspired the wrath of these middle-class citizens. Realtors, sensitive to growing environmental concerns, emphasized clean air when advertising surburban homes in the 1940s.[16] In the 1950s and early 1960s, the League of Women Voters and the Junior Chamber of Commerce, civic groups that drew membership from white-collar professional families, called for local legislation to curb factory emissions.[17]

The reformers task was difficult, however, because the local political structure welded together Gary's organized interests through policies that promoted economic growth. Keynesian precepts, which charged the federal government with the responsibility for stimulating national economic growth, also influenced the structure of local politics. Following World War II, urban politicians throughout the nation used economic growth to build coalitions from diverse constituencies.[18] Gary proved well suited to this approach; from 1945 through 1967, the major players in Gary politics—business, labor, ethnic organizations, and, to a lesser extent, churches in the black community—worked cooperatively through local government to advance the city's economic welfare.[19] Hence, city officials devoted their energies to improving the downtown shopping district and attracting new manufacturers to Gary. This arrangement was made possible by organized labor's willingness to confine class conflict to the workplace; labor leaders hoped that political tranquility would enhance the local business climate and thus increase private sector employment. For the ethnic associations, which marshalled white working-class voters to the polls for the Democratic party, local prosperity meant plenty of public sector jobs to distribute to their members. But the prime benefactor of growth politics was the business community and US Steel in particular. The steel company's reputation as the primary generator

    [16] Gary *Post-Tribune*, September 1, 1948, p. 33.

    [17] *Ibid.*, November 6, 1966, press clipping collection (Gary Public Library); Matthew Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution: A Study of Non-Decisionmaking in the Cities* (Baltimore, 1971), 66-67.

    [18] On the development of pro-growth coalitions in urban America see John Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, 1983).

    [19] The most thorough analysis of Gary's political structure in the 1950s can be found in Warner Bloomberg, "The Power Structure of an Industrial Community" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1961).

of local growth discouraged city leaders from antagonizing the corporation or raising operating costs.

Nevertheless, middle-class proponents of clean air managed to push air pollution reform onto the public agenda by emphasizing its contribution to economic growth. Industrial pollution made Gary look bad, especially in comparison to other cities such as Pittsburgh and St. Louis that had established programs to clean their air. The city's national image suffered when a well-publicized investigation ranked Gary's air quality as the worst in the United States during the late 1950s and early 1960s.[20] It was a small step from concerns about the city's reputation to the belief that cleaner air might promote economic growth. By the 1960s, reports outlining strategies for local economic development urged a reduction in air pollution to improve the city's image.[21] Even though advocates of environmental reform also pointed to the health hazards and inconveniences associated with pollution, it was the economic argument that made the issue palatable to many civic leaders whose foremost concern was local prosperity.

Realizing that business support was essential to the success of pollution reform, civic leaders collaborated with industry in formulating environmental policy. The business community was amenable, in part, because it understood that reformers were not out to harm industry. The common desire for a vibrant economy, combined with widespread public support for US Steel's right to manage production, ensured that the city would not pass any law hostile to industry. Furthermore, manufacturers had their own reasons for supporting local pollution reform initiatives. In public and private statements, business leaders expressed a preference for cooperating in the formulation of local regulation programs rather than facing outside control by state and federal anti-pollution regulations.[22]

Indeed, US Steel took a lead role in pushing for Gary's first air pollution control program. Granville Howell, the vice-president for operations at US Steel, took the first step toward legislation with a behind-the-scenes maneuver in 1955. Howell sent his sister to deliver a message to Milton Roth, a young attorney running for a seat on the city council. The message conveyed Howell's assurance that US Steel was ready to do something about air pollution; if the city council passed legislation, the corporation would comply.

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[20] Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution*, 72.

[21] Gary Plan Commission, *Comprehensive Plan, The City of Gary, Indiana, The Master Physical Development Plan for the City of Gary, Indiana* (Evanston, Ill., 1964), p. 6.2, box 4, Gary Collection (Calumet Regional Archives); Gary Redevelopment Commission, *Gary, Indiana, Community Renewal Program* (Mishawaka, Ind., 1968), 35, *ibid.*

[22] Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution*, 68, 72.

As he recalled many years later, Roth never knew whether or not Howell had authorization from the company to relay the message.[23] Perhaps Howell, acting on his own, wished to prod the company into action. Regardless of Howell's intent, Roth decided to accept his suggestion, making pollution reform the cornerstone of his campaign. He placed advertisements in the local press depicting young children wheezing in a cloud of smoke. If Pittsburgh and St. Louis passed anti-smoke laws, then Gary should be able to "muzzle smokestacks as well."[24] The campaign succeeded; Roth won a seat on the 1956 city council. Shortly thereafter, he introduced legislation calling for an air pollution control program.

Over the next seven years, the fate of a municipal air pollution program continued to depend on the involvement of US Steel. Roth's colleagues in the city council feared that environmental regulation would alienate the business community. At one point Gary's mayor urged Roth to abandon his proposal, calling the idea "insane."[25] The Chamber of Commerce's opposition to the proposal carried great weight among local politicians.[26] Despite the lobbying efforts of the League of Women Voters and the Junior Chamber of Commerce in support of reform, the city council procrastinated, placing the matter under study for several years. It was not until more positive signals came from business leaders that politicians summoned the courage to move forward. In the early 1960s, the Chamber of Commerce's position thawed; it began to recognize the benefit of some sort of law. But the crucial catalyst was once again US Steel. In the fall of 1962, the steel giant publicly endorsed smoke abatement legislation. In December, the city council established Gary's first air pollution control program.[27]

Crafted by city officials in consultation with US Steel, the pollution program treated industry leniently.[28] While the law set limitations on the density of smoke emissions and established fines for violations, it also exempted several steelmaking facilities from the regulations, including coke ovens. A key clause enabled industry to avoid compliance if it promised to take steps toward the gradual

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[23] Milton Roth, interview with author, Highland, Indiana, March 6, 1986.

[24] Campaign literature from Milton Roth's personal scrapbook, Highland, Indiana; Roth interview.

[25] Roth interview.

[26] Keeping in line with US Steel's hands-off stance toward local political squabbles, Howell may not have attempted to influence the Chamber of Commerce. Perhaps the bankers, realtors, and small businesspersons that composed the Chamber of Commerce were more reticent of government regulation than big steel. This explanation is consistent with the distinction between the positions of large and small businesses regarding federal regulation in the post-World War II period. See Alan Wolfe, *America's Impasse: The Rise and Fall of the Politics of Growth* (Boston, 1981), 23-24.

[27] Greer, *Big Steel*, 188.

[28] Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution*, 69-73.

reduction of air pollution. US Steel applied for an exemption, submitting a plan that promised to bring the company into compliance with the 1962 law by 1973. According to the proposal, the corporation would replace worn out equipment with more modern machinery retrofitted with smoke abatement devices. In essence, US Steel submitted a schedule of equipment retirement. Anxious to secure the company's cooperation, city officials approved US Steel's air pollution control program.[29]

Gary's 1962 air pollution ordinance, secured with the cooperation of business leaders, typified the conservative character of environmental regulation in the United States during the early 1960s. Policy makers at all levels of government preferred to curb industrial pollution without coercion. The procedures used to set federal water quality standards, for example, usually involved the organization of conferences where representatives from industry and government hammered out mutually agreeable pollution abatement schedules. States and localities commonly stacked pollution control boards with corporate representatives.[30] Gary's experience proved so typical that Matthew Crenson, a political scientist, chose the city as a case study to demonstrate the extent of corporate influence, even in the absence of direct company meddling, in the formulation of environmental policy. Crenson attributed Gary's mild law to policy makers' fear of offending US Steel, a fear grounded in widespread faith in the ability of industry to generate local economic growth.

By 1970, however, business-government cooperation no longer characterized environmental policy, either in Gary or Washington, D.C. Environmental politics turned confrontational as citizen activists, caught up in the fervor of anti-corporate passions, stood off squarely against industrialists. In 1966, Ralph Nader had galvanized public opinion against corporations with his crusade against unsafe consumer products. Subsequently, the renowned consumer activist took corporations to task for fouling the nation's air and water. Indeed, by 1970, much of the public hostility toward corporations was directed at industry's assault on nature. Media coverage of the Santa Barbara oil spill and the supposed death of Lake Erie in 1969 alerted Americans throughout the country to the eco-

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[29] *Ibid.*, 69-71; Greer, *Big Steel*, 188-89; Gary *Post-Tribune*, December 29, 1962, press clipping collection (Gary Public Library); Minutes of special meeting between US Steel and city officials, "Discussion of Variance Request by US Steel on the 1965 Agreement," September 1, 1972, personal collection of Elaine Beck (Gary, Indiana); US Steel Corporation, "Draft Report: Proposed Air Pollution Control Program for Gary Steel Works," June, 1965, *ibid.*; Gary Air Pollution Advisory Board Minutes, September 2, 1966, *ibid.*

[30] Martin Melosi, *Coping with Abundance: Energy and Environment in Industrial America* (Philadelphia, 1985), 212.

logical destruction wrought by manufacturing. For those who lived in the vicinity of Gary's steel mills, it was not difficult to reach similar conclusions. Indeed, Nader singled out US Steel's operation in Gary for admonishment in a 1970 address. "What right has this company," asked Nader rhetorically, "to contaminate this city, damage homes, depreciate property, and injure health?"[31] But while Gary citizens participated in this national movement, they constructed a more adversarial environmental agenda in the context of local circumstances, particularly recent developments concerning race relations.

An explosion of racial tensions in the late 1960s provoked new social demands and ultimately shattered the political consensus that had undergirded a nascent, feeble air pollution program. Polarization between the races intensified during the 1960s as African Americans pressed for social equality while whites resisted further change. Whites and blacks in Gary clashed over an open-occupancy housing law early in the decade.[32] African-American students boycotted classes in 1968 to protest racial discrimination in the city schools.[33] Later that summer, African-American residents from Midtown, an area spanning two square miles in the geographic center of Gary, torched three downtown buildings and looted department stores, unleashing the same frustrations that prompted riots throughout urban America.[34] Many whites fled the city in response to increased black militancy. Those who remained were equally disturbed. Labor unions, business leaders, and ethnic clubs no longer commanded the allegiance that they had enjoyed when community concerns revolved around economic growth and jobs. In their place arose new leaders and organizations that directly addressed the challenges posed by racial conflict.

African Americans took the lead in challenging politics-as-usual, severing their ties to the local Democratic machine and rallying around the candidacy of Richard Hatcher in his bid to become Gary's first black mayor. Persistent discrimination in public housing, city employment, and municipal services convinced blacks that their electoral contribution to the growth coalition earned them inadequate rewards. Efforts by white, liberal politicians to redress grievances proceeded far too slowly, blacks charged.[35] Expressing blacks' frustration with their supposed allies, one local

[31] Gary *Post-Tribune*, November 18, 1970, press clipping scrapbook (Gary Air Pollution Division, Gary, Indiana).

[32] James B. Lane, *City of the Century: A History of Gary, Indiana* (Bloomington, 1978), 279.

[33] *Ibid.*, 294; *Gary Info*, May 24, 1968, p. 1.

[34] *Gary Info*, August 2, 1968, pp. 1-2.

[35] Chicago *Sun-Times*, July 31, 1966, press clipping collection (Gary Public Library); Edward Greer, "The 'Liberation' of Gary, Indiana," *Transaction*, VIII (January, 1971), 30-34.

activist asserted that "whitism comes through far more pronounced than liberalism."[36] The opportunity to initiate an independent political strategy materialized in the mid-1960s as white flight and steady population growth among blacks gave African Americans a numerical majority in the city. Inspired by the national black power movement that urged black Americans to wrest control of institutions that shaped their lives, Gary's African-American leaders considered running their own candidate in the next mayoral election. Hatcher seized the opportunity and spirit by opposing the incumbent mayor in the Democratic primary in 1967. African Americans united around Hatcher, even when it meant severing old alliances. Black steelworkers usually voted with their union's mandate, but when organized labor endorsed the incumbent mayor, black union leaders formed their own political action committee to assist Hatcher. With solid backing in the African-American community and a smattering of support from liberal whites, Hatcher captured a narrow victory in the primary election and went on to defeat his Republican challenger in November.

In response to Hatcher's election and a more assertive black community, many whites rallied around the defense of their neighborhoods. Middle-class whites feared that emboldened blacks would rush into their suburban enclaves. White, working-class residents feared Hatcher's election would render them powerless and deny them city services.[37] These worries prompted whites to band together in community-based organizations. And it was these new community groups that pressed an aggressive, anti-corporate environmental agenda.

In suburban Miller, new community organizations embraced environmental protection, in part, to preserve the neighborhood's racial character. Surrounded by woods, sand dunes, and Lake Michigan, Miller became the last refuge for Gary's affluent whites. With a large contingent of white-collar professionals, its inhabitants had always expressed interest in the environment; many were long standing members of the League of Women Voters. But this concern assumed new proportions in the late 1960s and early 1970s as Miller's leaders discovered a congruity between environmental protection and the maintenance of community stability. In 1971, three home owners founded the Miller Citizens Corporation with the primary objective of discouraging panic selling among white property holders and preventing a rapid influx of

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[36] Charles H. King, "What Happens When Power Changes Hands; Black Cities, Test Tubes of Urban Crisis," Address to International Conference of Human Rights Agencies, Portland, Oregon, box 1, Judy Eichorn Collection (Calumet Regional Archives).

[37] Charles H. Levine, *Racial Conflict and the American Mayor* (Lexington, Mass., 1974), 74.
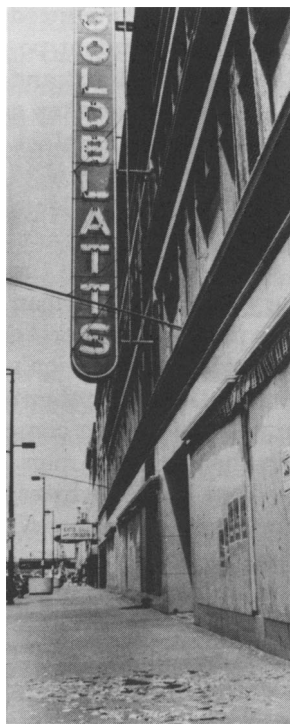
BOARDED BUILDINGS
ON BROADWAY

Courtesy Calumet Regional Archives,
Indiana University Northwest.

blacks.[38] In its first newsletter, the group reminded members, "An area cannot turn black if there are few homes for sale. . . . The pattern of other communities which have undergone rapid racial change need not be ours."[39] Miller Citizens Corporation leaders used their pristine surroundings as a selling point to dissuade whites from leaving. One of their brochures asked rhetorically, "Where else could you catch salmon or trout in the morning, be in easy access to your metropolitan office, attend a major league game in the afternoon, and still enjoy a dinner with the family in a home near the big water or nestled in the wooded dunes?"[40] In a more active attempt to protect Miller's rustic landscape, the group launched a campaign to prevent the destruction of sand dunes.[41]

Preserving Miller's beauty required residents to maintain a vigilant defense against local industrial development, an undertaking that brought the community into conflict with manufacturers, thereby fueling popular resentment toward industry. Of particular concern were attempts to site new facilities along the Lake Michigan shore. US Steel claimed that it needed more space for expansion; the local utility company also coveted the lakeshore for a new generating station. The Miller Citizens Corporation did its part to block industrial encroachment by participating in a campaign to place Miller's undeveloped areas within the confines of a national park. But the task of keeping industry out of Miller fell primarily to another organization, Community Action to Reverse

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[38] Judy Smith, Miller Citizens Corporation, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, March 14, 1986.

[39] *Miller Message*, August 2, 1971, p. 2, press clipping collection (Gary Public Library).

[40] Fred Grady, Miller Citizens Corporation, "The Message of Miller," first draft, September, 1973, box 1, Miller Citizens Corporation Collection (Calumet Regional Archives).

[41] *Miller Message*, August 2, 1971, p. 1, press clipping collection (Gary Public Library); *Miller Message*, January, 1972, box 1, Miller Citizens Corporation Collection.

Pollution, better known by its acronym CARP, a reference to the garbage-eating fish. Embracing many of the same people who participated in the Miller Citizens Corporation, CARP distinguished itself from the former group by adopting an explicit environmental mission: prevent any form of industrial pollution from despoiling Miller.[42] CARP spent most of its energy fighting the local utility company's attempt to build a new power plant, but the group also attacked US Steel for its dirty air and water emissions. Although these suburban activists previously had maintained cordial relations with local industry, the relationship soured as business grew intransigent toward their environmental demands. Thus, in the struggle to preserve Miller's environmental amenities, members of the Miller Citizens Corporation and CARP found an enemy in industry.

Grass-roots environmentalism in working-class districts found expression in the Calumet Community Congress, an organization also born out of the racial tensions that gripped Gary in the late 1960s. Alarmed by the racial hatred that ran rampant through blue-collar neighborhoods in the wake of Hatcher's election, several clergymen, labor activists, and community leaders formed the Calumet Community Congress to channel frustrations in a more positive direction. The group's organizers targeted their appeal at blue-collar workers who felt ignored, perhaps even betrayed, by the civil rights movement. No African Americans were invited to join. This strategy was not peculiar to Gary; community activists in Chicago, Newark, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Cleveland formed similar organizations to combat political alienation among the white working-class. What set the Calumet Community Congress apart was its emphasis on the environment. The founders of the Congress knew that their success in mobilizing working-class citizens hinged on their ability to identify immediate and tangible issues. As they scanned the panorama of popular concerns, industrial pollution sprang out as the most appropriate focus for their organizing drive. The strategy worked. At the founding Congress, held in the gymnasium of the George Rodgers high school on December 5, 1970, attendance exceeded one thousand. Delegates passed resolutions demanding stricter air pollution controls on industry, more fishing access to Lake Michigan, and cleaner rivers.[43]

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[42] Helen Hoock, CARP, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, April 2, 1986; Carol Wilmore, CARP, "Statement to Great Lakes Basin Commission," November 29, 1972, folder 2, box 1, Community Action to Reverse Pollution Collection (Calumet Regional Archives).

[43] Beverly Wright, Calumet Community Congress, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, May 27, 1986; "Regional Consultations Leading Up to a National Platform Conference for Working Class White Ethnic Communities," n.d., 5-6, box 1, Calumet Community Congress Collection (Calumet Regional Archives); Richard J. Krickus, "Organizing Neighborhoods: Gary and Newark," *The World of the Blue Collar Worker*, ed. Irving Howe (New York, 1972), 74, 78; Calumet Community Congress, "Resolutions Ballot," 1970, personal collection of Beverly Wright (Gary, Indiana).

In its environmental thrust, the Calumet Community Congress revived a working-class hostility toward US Steel no longer sanctioned by organized labor. The hard-fought struggles to unionize the steel mills earlier in the century imbued Gary's working class with a long history of antagonism toward the company. After US Steel recognized the legitimacy of the steelworkers union in 1937, workers continued to clash with management over wages, benefits, and shop floor work rules. Through the 1950s, periodic strikes attested to strained labor-management relations. But in the 1960s, the union adopted a more conciliatory approach, reasoning that workers' interests would be served best by cooperative efforts to raise productivity levels. To the dismay of militant steelworkers, the union avoided taking positions that might antagonize the company.[44] This held particularly true for non-workplace issues. Even in the 1940s and 1950s, the steelworkers union neglected the community dimensions of class conflict. Aside from some squabbling over levels of public spending for education and welfare, the company and union agreed on most civic matters. Consequently, when industrial pollution rekindled working-class insurgency in 1970, the union was inclined to remain on the sidelines. For blue-collar workers and their families then, the Calumet Community Congress provided a means of empowerment in the face of anxieties about the Hatcher administration and abandonment by their union.

Largely due to the initiatives of Mayor Hatcher, African Americans also broadened their condemnation of industry's social abuses to include environmental degradation. US Steel had never enjoyed popularity in the black community; discriminatory hiring practices had made the company the target of civil rights campaigns since the 1940s. Hatcher shared this antagonistic outlook toward the corporation; in his mind, industry was very much to blame for the economic inequities faced by Gary's African Americans. Furthermore, the mayor could afford to antagonize US Steel because he did not rely on the business community for political support and because the corporation held little influence among African-American voters. Many years later, Hatcher recalled, "What helped was that US Steel could not control the black community politically. It was mine."[45] Once in office, Hatcher distinguished himself from previous mayors with his antagonistic stance toward US Steel. Initially, the main issue of contention between the mayor and the steel company was not the environment but corporate taxes. As early as 1967 Hatcher pledged to raise corpo-

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[44] Richard Betheil, "The ENA in Perspective: The Transformation of Collective Bargaining in the Basic Steel Industry," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, X (Summer, 1978), 1-24.

[45] Richard Hatcher, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, May 26, 1989.

rate taxes on the grounds that US Steel property was grossly un-
derassessed. Hatcher required revenue to finance his social
programs; hence, he interpreted the company's unwillingness to
pay its fair share of taxes as a direct attack on the city's needy. In
1968 the Hatcher administration roused the company's ire by de-
manding to inspect US Steel's financial records. The company re-
fused to comply, provoking court battles and several years of
negotiations between US Steel and the city.[46]

Meanwhile, Hatcher opened a second front against industry,
waging war against corporate polluters. Hatcher understood that
the quality of physical surroundings constituted an important
problem for Gary's African-American population. Viewed from the
vantage point of leader of the black community, the environmental
problem, for Hatcher, was the deplorable physical condition of Mid-
town, the neighborhood where most blacks lived. Midtown suffered
from rapid physical deterioration in the decades following World
War II. Overcrowding—the product of a racially segregated hous-
ing market—strained the neighborhood's resources so that by the
1960s, garbage piled in the streets, rats proliferated in abandoned
lots, and homes became dilapidated. But while Hatcher directed
much of his attention to these problems, he also accorded high pri-
ority to air pollution. A study indicating an unusually high level
of respiratory disorders in the Gary area caught Hatcher's atten-
tion during his tenure on the city council. The report convinced
him that factory discharges constituted a public health threat for
residents near the steel mills, including most of the city's black
population.[47] To Hatcher, then, African Americans' exposure to
some of the highest air pollution levels in the city represented yet
another facet of corporate exploitation of the black community.
Midway through his first term, after many of his social programs
were in place, Hatcher showcased a new environmental program,
calling on US Steel to slow production during temperature inver-
sions, create a steel reclamation facility, and provide a rapid trans-
port system for its workers.[48] Shortly thereafter, the mayor
engineered an overhaul of the city's air pollution bureaucracy,
making personnel changes to improve enforcement of the local air
pollution ordinance. In 1971, he appointed Herschel Bornstein, a
feisty local physician, as commissioner of the Gary health depart-

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[46] Greer, *Big Steel*, 161-181. Not all analyses of Gary politics have emphasized
Hatcher's confrontational stance toward US Steel. Levine, for instance, has argued
that Hatcher attempted to persuade US Steel to become involved in tackling the
city's social ills, particularly with regard to housing. See Levine, *Racial Conflict
and the American Mayor*, 76-78. Yet Hatcher's relationship with the company was
far less cordial than were previous mayors' relations with the company.

[47] Hatcher interview.

[48] Gary *Post-Tribune*, September 16, 1970, press clipping scrapbook (Gary Air
Pollution Division).

ment. Bornstein stirred controversy with his surprise factory inspections. To complement Bornstein's appointment, Hatcher also reversed the pro-business orientation of the Air Pollution Advisory Board by stacking the agency with environmentalists.[49]

As part of his commitment to combat industrial pollution, Hatcher raised awareness of the problem among African Americans. Prior to 1970 no black leader in Gary had emphasized air quality. Most African Americans believed that pollution had little to do with them. Hatcher attempted to shatter this notion. At public appearances and press conferences, the mayor hammered away at the same theme: industrial emissions damaged the health of Gary's black residents; this was indeed a black issue.[50] A 1972 survey of African Americans suggested Hatcher's effectiveness; respondents identified pollution control as one of their top concerns.[51] Several black citizens became prominent advocates of environmental protection during the 1970s. At times Hatcher was directly responsible, appointing blacks to government positions that involved environmental matters such as director of city planning, chief of the air pollution division, and manager of the Marquette Park pavilion. In other instances, black activism emerged independently of the mayor, as in west Gary, where several black residents helped found the Grand Calumet Task Force to combat water pollution in the Grand Calumet River.[52]

A strong stand on air pollution, while consistent with Hatcher's attempt to improve the living conditions of African Americans, also held forth promise for unifying a divided city. At a time of severe racial polarization, Hatcher searched for issues that might heal racial rifts. Certainly Hatcher's priorities remained with Gary's African Americans, but he also coveted the support of whites in an effort to establish himself as leader of the entire city. Attempting to formulate a public agenda that would address social inequities without intensifying racial animosities, Hatcher directed attention to US Steel's abuse of the community. When Hatcher visited homes and attended meetings in white neighborhoods, he discovered that taxes and pollution were the only issues on his platform he could discuss without alienating his audience. Of the two, pollution incited the greatest public response. When

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[49] *Ibid.*, January 17, 1971, press clipping scrapbook (Gary Air Pollution Division); *ibid.*, April 20, 1971, personal collection of Herschel Bornstein (Gary, Indiana); Herschel Bornstein, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, April 8, 1986; Greer, *Big Steel*, 190-91; Gerald W. Grandey, Lawrence S. Grossman, and Alan P. Donaldson, "The Manischewitz Caper," May, 1971, p. 16, unpublished term paper, Northwestern School of Law, Chicago, Illinois.

[50] Hatcher interview.

[51] *Gary Info*, December 28, 1972, p. 4.

[52] Ann Anderson, Grand Calumet Task Force, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, May 20, 1989.

RICHARD HATCHER ADDRESSES
A CARP GATHERING
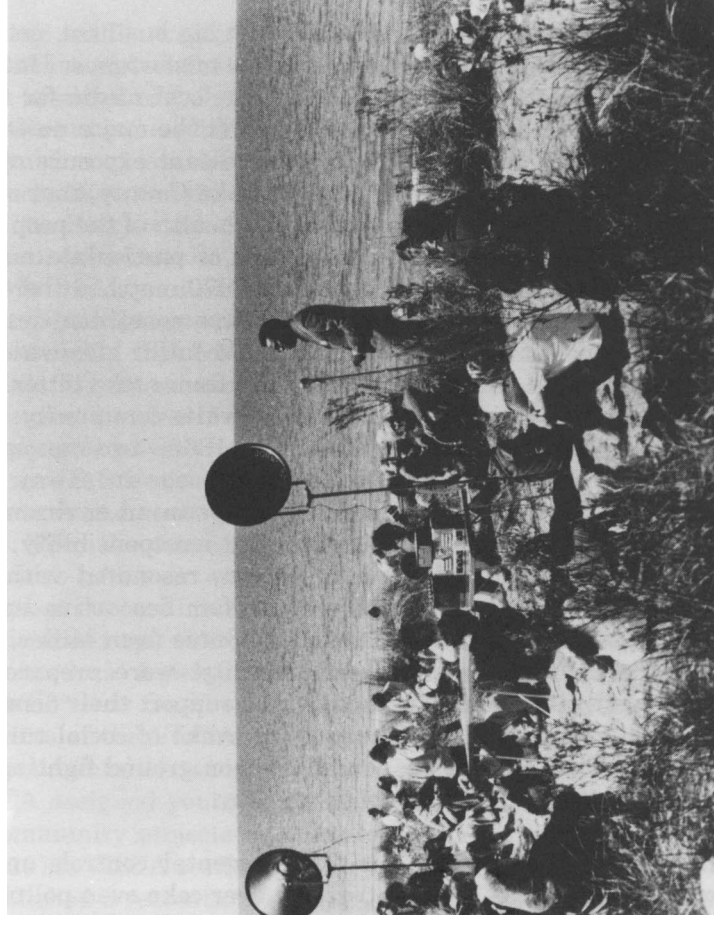
framing the pollution issue, he stressed that big business, not any particular race, stood at the root of Gary's misfortunes. Hatcher summarized his position in a critique of the local media for their coverage of crime in Gary, asking, "Why don't the major news media in Gary subject their readers to an incessant exposure of the most damaging criminal activity in all of Lake County, that of US Steel, that giant industry which wrecks the health of the people by belching out smoke containing two pounds of particulate matter per Gary citizen per day?"[53] Few issues in 1970 matched the environment in its potential to appeal to diverse constituencies. By seizing the air pollution issue, Hatcher could fulfill his own environmental objectives, divert public attention from racial bitterness, and maintain some political support in the white community.

Out of the social turbulence of the late 1960s arose an opportunity for Hatcher to reframe the pollution issue in a way that encouraged the participation of diverse groups in an environmental movement. The theme of steel company irresponsibility, propounded most explicitly by the new mayor, resonated with the critique offered by disgruntled blue-collar families active in the Calumet Community Congress. Suburban whites from Miller, concerned primarily with neighborhood stability, were prepared to forge alliances with others who promised to support their demanding environmental objectives. Thus, in the wake of social turmoil newly mobilized political forces found common ground fighting industry over matters of environmental quality.

The drive to impose harsher environmental controls on US Steel culminated in the 1970 controversy over coke oven pollution. Coke manufacturing formed a vital part of US Steel's operations in Gary. The company used coke to smelt iron ore in its blast furnaces. It manufactured coke by baking coal at high temperatures, a process which generated enormous quantities of waste. Every time workers opened an oven, either to insert coal or to remove finished coke, smoke escaped in billowing black clouds. Carbon particles, sulfur oxides, hydrocarbons, and carbon monoxide drifted into Gary's atmosphere uncontrolled. The carbon particles alone totaled 40,000 tons each year.[54] These emissions were perfectly legal because, at US Steel's behest, Gary's air pollution regulations exempted coke ovens. To local environmentalists, this omission was unacceptable; coke oven pollution constituted the most serious environmental threat to Gary's citizens. Dense smoke from the coke plant obscured visibility on the nearby interstate highway,

    [53] *Gary Info*, December 11, 1970, pp. 1, 4.

    [54] Community Action to Reverse Pollution, "Why We Need Ordinance #70-60," December 1, 1970, p. 1, folder 7, box 1, Community Action to Reverse Pollution Collection; Grandey, Grossman, and Donaldson, "The Manischewitz Caper," p. 5.

causing traffic accidents. Toxic fumes seeped into homes.[55] Local physicians noted that Gary residents suffered from abnormally high levels of carbon accumulation in their lungs, thus heightening the risk of cancer, emphysema, and bronchitis.[56] Without the compulsion of law, US Steel showed no indication of ameliorating the hazardous conditions.

The Hatcher administration initiated the process of amending the municipal smoke abatement ordinance by submitting legislation to the city council during the summer of 1970.[57] From that point, citizen groups took charge. US Steel vehemently opposed the bill, insisting that coke emission controls were technologically infeasible. Unsure of the company's claims, the city council moved in September to table the bill for three months. This delay gave community groups the time to mobilize citizen pressure and to investigate US Steel's assertions. CARP members read technical literature and consulted with chemists, engineers, and union officials. They discovered that US Steel was wrong; methods existed to reduce coke oven smoke.[58] Meanwhile, the Calumet Community Congress devoted its energies to publicity. Its members convened public meetings, circulated petitions, and held demonstrations to convince local legislators of the widespread community support for the bill.[59] War On Poverty volunteers, working in Gary under the auspices of the VISTA program, provided a bridge between white environmentalists and concerned citizens in the black community. VISTA assigned young men and women from around the country to community projects in inner city neighborhoods; between 1969 and 1971, VISTA staffers in Gary, who were predominantly white, established a recreational center, organized a food cooperative, administered a breakfast program, and encouraged parents to become more involved with local schools. Because they lived in Midtown and interacted with residents there daily, VISTA workers were among the few whites who earned the trust of African Americans. When Hatcher raised the issue of coke oven pollution, two VISTA staffers, Phil Starr and Robert Baer, assumed the role of coordinating the activities of the various social groups. Starr and Baer solic-

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[55] Testimony of Ted Falls, Northwest Indiana Clean Air Co-Ordinating Committee, before Gary Air Pollution Control Advisory Board, September 3, 1970, Beck Collection.

[56] Jack Troy, M.D., Committee on Environmental Health, Indiana Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, to Gary, Indiana, City Council, December 15, 1970, folder 7, box 1, Community Action to Reverse Pollution Collection; Gary *Post-Tribune*, April 22, 1973, press clipping collection (Gary Public Library).

[57] Gary *Post-Tribune*, March 8, 1970, B-1; *ibid.*, September 12, 1970, press clipping scrapbook (Gary Public Library); Hatcher interview.

[58] Helen Hoock, testimony before Gary, Indiana, city council on behalf of CARP, December 15, 1970, folder 7, box 1, Community Action to Reverse Pollution Collection.

[59] Gary *Post-Tribune*, December 15, 1970, B-3.

ited support by talking with people in the housing projects and settlement houses. Starr and Baer proved particularly successful with young gang members, convincing them to appear at city council hearings. The mayor's strong position on coke oven pollution undoubtedly helped Starr and Baer; Hatcher had made a special effort to cultivate a healthy relationship with black youth gangs.[60]

Reflecting widespread hostility toward US Steel, the community campaign for coke oven control assumed a confrontational tone. The corporation remained adamant in its refusal to compromise. Company representatives warned that any such amendment might force it to curtail coke manufacturing, thus placing thousands out of work.[61] The citizen groups, too, adopted a hard line and directed venomous criticism against the steel company. The Calumet Community Congress's rhetoric attacked US Steel's exploitation of Gary's citizens. The group pestered steel executives, challenging the superintendent of Gary Works to appear before its membership to defend his position.[62] Hatcher chided US Steel for its "thinly veiled blackmail threats that the corporation might have to close down the mills."[63] Black youths appearing before the city council accused US Steel or ruining their lives by subjecting them to unhealthy conditions. Emotions ran so high that "Donut," the defense minister of a black youth gang, warned the council that his entourage would be waiting in the parking lot for anyone who failed to vote for the amendment.[64]

The campaign to arouse public indignation against the steel company and to unleash citizen pressure on the city council succeeded. In one week, the Calumet Community Congress gathered 2,500 signatures on a petition in favor of the ordinance.[65] On the night of the city council vote, the Congress marshalled a crowd of 350 angry citizens into the chamber to demonstrate public support for the measure. Mayor Hatcher made a personal appearance to plead before local legislators. Although several weeks earlier the chances for the bill's passage seemed uncertain at best, public pressure contributed to a unanimous city council vote in favor of coke emission control.[66]

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[60] Starr interview; Frady, "Gary, Indiana," 38.

[61] Gary *Post-Tribune*, September 16, 1970, press clipping scrapbook (Gary Public Library, Gary, Indiana).

[62] *Ibid.*, December 15, 1970, p. 1.

[63] *Ibid.*, December 16, 1970, p. 1.

[64] Not all groups were so indignant or hostile to US Steel. The Junior Chamber of Commerce, a major proponent of the 1962 ordinance, lent a qualified endorsement to the coke oven bill; it specifically noted in its letter to the council that the Jaycees were not "anti-US Steel." Gary *Post-Tribune*, December 15, 1970, B-3; Starr interview.

[65] Calumet Community Congress Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for December 16, 1970, Wright Collection.

[66] Krickus, "Organizing Neighborhoods: Gary and Newark," 78-79.

The confrontation with US Steel over coke ovens forced the issues of manufacturing procedures and technology into the realm of public debate. Prior air pollution regulations had set permissible emission levels and left the matter of attainment to the corporation. The coke oven affair demonstrated that by 1970 citizens no longer accepted the corporation's authority to decide what was technologically feasible. While city officials and environmentalists conceded that full compliance with the new law would have to wait until US Steel had time to install sophisticated pollution control devices, they insisted that the company take specific interim steps. Some of these measures involved minor housekeeping improvements: sealing cracks on oven doors, replacing oven lids immediately after charging, and using only the cleanest furnaces at times of lowered production. Other demands required more substantial changes in the production process. One of the sore points among environmentalists was a technique known as the "green push" whereby the company baked coke prematurely for the sake of speeding production. CARP argued that incomplete cooking increased the amount of unfused coke particles released into the atmosphere; the group insisted that the company be required to keep coal in the ovens until it was fully baked. Furthermore, it recommended that US Steel reduce the amount of coal baked during each cycle.[67] When Judge James Richards upheld the coke oven law in federal court in May, 1972, he incorporated these procedures in his decision.[68] By the mid-1970s, US Steel management had acquiesced; the company rebuilt oven doors, improved furnace maintenance, and required workers to pay attention to proper coking times.[69]

The citizen coalition behind the coke oven crusade represented a novel social alignment. Groups that often stood on opposite sides of issues joined forces against industrial pollution. For instance, the coke oven campaign marked the first time that Gary's black citizens worked cooperatively with white environmentalists. While young people played the most active role, several black organizations publicly endorsed the coke oven amendment. Hence, the list of groups in support of the measure contained some odd bedfellows; the National Asssociation for the Advancement of Colored People and the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Mothers Organization stood alongside the Dune Homemakers Club and the League

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[67] Community Action to Reverse Pollution, "Friend of the Court Statement to Gary Air Pollution Appeal Board," July 7, 1971, personal collection of Milton Roth (Highland, Indiana); Community Action to Reverse Pollution, "Why We Need Ordinance #70-60."

[68] Donald Dreyfus, Attorney, Gary Health Department, "Coke Plant Decision Affirmed," press release, May, 1972, Bornstein Collection.

[69] Victor Nordlund, USX Corporation, interview with author, Gary, Indiana, May 20, 1986; Gary *Post-Tribune*, June 29, 1972, press clipping scrapbook.

of Women Voters.[70] Further enhancing the novelty of the social alignment was the limited contribution made by Gary's traditional organized power groups. Ethnic associations were nowhere to be found while organized labor played only a minimal role in the affair. Orval Kincaid, the sub-district director of the steelworkers union, promised to circulate petitions among workers, but he never submitted the completed forms. Indeed, the only show of support from organized labor occurred on the night of the city council vote when Kincaid and another union leader testified on behalf of the bill.[71]

Gary's coke oven regulations, imposed on US Steel despite company resistance, resulted from the emergence of a political coalition that did not hold economic growth as its primary objective. Certainly, neither the recently mobilized black community nor the white organizations opposed material prosperity. Yet, these groups did not always see their interest served by unbridled industrial production. Mayor Hatcher could hardly place undying faith in economic growth when blacks had been denied the rewards of prosperity. Gary's white environmentalists sought further limitations on private enterprise when the consequences of industrial production threatened the amenities that came to define the middle-class lifestyle. CARP's slogan, "Opposition to blind progress, not blind opposition to progress," neatly captured the tempered middle-class attitude toward economic expansion. Although the social developments responsible for the reorientation in values took place gradually in the decades after World War II, it was not until racial tensions destroyed the growth-oriented political structure in the late 1960s that the new coalition was able to transform the basis of public policy.

Within a few years after the coke oven victory, the fragility of the environmental coalition became apparent. A downturn in the local economy exposed cracks in the once solid community front against industry. US Steel laid off thousands of workers at Gary Works during the steel slump of the 1970s. By the end of the decade, Gary's unemployment rate topped 14 percent.[72] For those whose livelihoods depended on steel production, economic security became an overriding concern once again. Citizens grew more susceptible to the steel company's threats to shut down operations if it were pushed too hard on environmental matters. Hence, those who felt most vulnerable to job loss, blacks and lower-income whites, withdrew their support for stringent environmental con-

[70] Helen Hoock, testimony on behalf of CARP, December 15, 1970.
[71] Hoock interview; Gary *Post-Tribune*, December 16, 1970, p. 1.
[72] U.S. Census, *1980 Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts, Gary-Hammond-E. Chicago, Ind., PHC-80-2-169*, page P62.

CARP PICNIC NEAR LAKE MICHIGAN

Courtesy Calumet Regional Archives, Indiana University Northwest.

trols. Only affluent professionals from Miller, at least one step re-
moved from the steel economy, could afford to maintain constant
vigilance against industry without fear of immediate retribution.
Local political leaders found it increasingly difficult to take a
strong stand against industry when public pressure on behalf of
environmental reform came from only one section of the city.

The fissures in the environmental coalition appeared most
clearly in 1974 when the Environmental Protection Agency at-
tempted to close US Steel's open-hearth furnaces. In an earlier
agreement with local, state, and federal authorities, US Steel had
vowed to replace its open-hearth furnaces with cleaner basic-oxy-
gen furnaces by the end of 1974. As the deadline approached, the
corporation asked for an extension, threatening to dismiss 4,000
workers if the authorities refused. The local steelworkers union,
which had previously refrained from active engagement in pollu-
tion matters, begged the city to keep the mills open. Miller activ-
ists, on the other hand, argued that the furnaces should be closed
as scheduled. Mayor Hatcher, lobbied intensively by labor, civil
rights leaders, and environmental groups retreated from his un-
compromising environmental stance and attempted to occupy a
middle ground. Hatcher supported a six-month extension with the

stipulation that US Steel pay a hefty fine.[73] By shifting the debate away from health and community power to an issue of jobs, Hatcher could no longer determine the form of community outrage; hence, industry regained the upper hand in the formulation of environmental policy.[74]

Gary's history demonstrates how the political activities of lower-income groups influenced the character and effectiveness of environmental reform. The roles played by African Americans and ethnic industrial workers in Gary's environmental struggles varied considerably, from non-involvement, to active support, to blatant opposition. Where they stood along this spectrum at any given time made a difference. Only when the environmental movement incorporated these groups, along with affluent whites, did Gary's environmentalists attain the clout necessary to challenge the steel company successfully. While historians, most notably Samuel Hays, have convincingly explained the rise of environmentalism among affluent Americans, the factors that inspired minority and working-class involvement in the movement are less understood. Gary's history illuminates the social and political forces that, in one instance, produced a multi-racial and multi-class environmental coalition. Timing was critical. The collapse of the old political regime that had placed primacy on economic growth permitted

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[73] Gary *Post-Tribune*, December 11, 1974, press clipping scrapbook; *ibid.*, December 19, 1974, press clipping scrapbook; *ibid.*, December 20, 1974, press clipping scrapbook; *ibid.*, December 21, 1974, press clipping scrapbook; *ibid.*, December 23, 1974, press clipping scrapbook; New York *Times*, January 5, 1975, p. 43; Greer, *Big Steel*, 194-95; Ezell Cooper, NAACP and United Steelworkers of America, interview with author, Griffith, Indiana, May 16, 1989.

[74] Indeed, anxiety about offending industry eventually led voters to turn Hatcher out of office in 1987 in favor of a candidate who promised to cultivate friendlier relations with big business. New York *Times*, May 7, 1987, sec. A, p. 16. The shift in local environmental politics prefigured a parallel shift in the realm of national politics. Between 1973 and 1977, the Environmental Protection Agency launched a series of lawsuits against US Steel for violating national air and water quality standards. While municipal government reverted to negotiating with the steel company, the federal government preferred to prosecute. See Gary *Post-Tribune*, January 25, 1973, B-1; Chicago *Sun-Times*, December 11, 1975, press clipping scrapbook (Calumet Regional Archives); Edgar Speer, chairman of US Steel Corporation to Management, February 23, 1976, Beck Collection; Greer, *Big Steel*, 201-202. By the late 1970s, however, the federal government's enthusiasm began to wane. Pressure from organized labor to protect jobs and high inflation rates convinced the Jimmy Carter administration to consider the economic cost of regulation when pursuing environmental criminals. The Reagan administration demonstrated even more sensitivity to the costs incurred by businesses subjected to environmental controls. In particular, sympathy for the ailing steel industry prompted the federal government, in 1981, to pass the Steel Industry Compliance Extension Act which allowed steel companies to defer pollution control expenditures for three years. By the 1980s, the steel industry encountered little governmental pressure to further reduce air pollution. See Walter A. Rosenbaum, *Environmental Politics and Policy* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 23; Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence*, 298-300, 313; New York *Times*, September 6, 1987, F-6; Edward Wojciechowski, Environmental Protection Agency, Region V, interview with author, Chicago, Illinois, May 19, 1989.

Mayor Hatcher to reconstruct the environmental agenda. By embedding the air pollution problem in a comprehensive critique of corporate power in urban society, Hatcher articulated a version of environmentalism that appealed to a diverse constituency.

While the social turbulence of the late 1960s called existing political arrangements into question throughout urban America, the dynamics of community revolt varied considerably. In many cities, the broad outlines of political change mirrored the situation in Gary: heightened racial conflict redirected civic priorities from urban redevelopment and business prosperity to the politics of neighborhood played out in controversies over schools, housing, and the distribution of city services. For African Americans, the crucial issues were control of community institutions and an end to racial discrimination. Where they enjoyed numerical majorities, African Americans attempted to elect black mayors, a strategy that met with success in Cleveland, Newark, Detroit, and Atlanta between 1967 and 1973. But blacks were not alone in employing spatial concentration as a political resource. Many white residents formed neighborhood organizations to defend their communities against rapid racial change, highway construction, and unsightly commercial development. Affluent white activists around the country—those who opposed the winter Olympics in Denver, or blocked the Mount Hood expressway in Portland, or organized to stop high-rise construction in Seattle—all rejected growth schemes in the name of preserving neighborhood stability and environmental amenities. Lower-income residents launched similar protests when urban renewal projects threatened to displace them from their neighborhoods. According to some worried observers, the full effect of these citizen demands for social justice, neighborhood stability, and the preservation of residential amenities, articulated through grass-roots organizations, amounted to no less than a "community revolution."[75] While this political upheaval involved a wide range of social groups, the formation of alliances was difficult to predict. Many groups advanced their causes independently; mutual distrust between blacks and whites often impeded collaborative efforts. Exceptions occurred when political entrepreneurs deliberately engineered broad-based coalitions, as in Atlanta where Maynard Jackson, the city's first African-American mayor, won election in 1973 with the support of disaffected blacks and

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[75] See Daniel Bell and Virginia Held, "The Community Revolution," *The Public Interest*, XVI (Summer, 1969), 142-77. For information on the dynamics of community protests in specific cities see: Carl Abbott, *The New Urban America: Growth Politics in Sunbelt Cities* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 200-201, 214-43; John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, 1983), 180-212. On the potentials of anti-growth coalitions in urban politics see Harvey Molotch, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXXXII (September, 1976), 325-27.

white liberals concerned with community amenities.[76] In Boston and San Francisco black and white residents facing the common threat of displacement by urban renewal projects joined forces in opposition to local governments that placed a higher priority on economic growth than social welfare.[77]

A rejection of growth politics, however, did not require a frontal assault on corporations; despite the political challenges posed by protest groups and neighborhood associations, the community revolution rarely translated into a sweeping attack on corporate power. Ira Katznelson, a political scientist, suggested that African Americans in the late 1960s had the unique ability to develop a comprehensive critique of power relations in urban society because they detected a common thread of racism pervading both workplace and community.[78] By this standard, the performance of most African-American mayors was disappointing; few confronted local business elites. Carl Stokes of Cleveland, Tom Bradley of Los Angeles, and Kenneth Gibson of Newark cultivated ties with local business leaders to cement their political coalitions.[79] Revolts against development projects in low-income neighborhoods usually targeted local governments rather than specific corporations. Hence, those most capable of developing a class analysis of corporate power in the community failed to do so. Ironically, the most significant assault on business prerogatives in the late 1960s came from those affluent whites who championed environmental protection. Certainly, environmentalists benefitted from the reorientation of American politics as the weakening of pro-growth politics opened a wedge for causes that affluent citizens identified as pressing public needs. But African Americans and working-class whites remained largely on the periphery of the drive to reduce pollution. Thus, environmentalists found little incentive to extend their critique of corporate behavior beyond those matters that affected the quality of residential life.

What then accounted for the difference in Gary? What factors brought together disparate elements of the revolt against growth politics into an anti-corporate environmental coalition? Certainly Hatcher deserves credit for seizing a unique historical opportunity by recasting the pollution issue to incorporate environmental concerns and a more comprehensive critique of US Steel's role in the community. But certain circumstances peculiar to Gary made his

[76] Abbott, *The New Urban America*, 229-32.

[77] Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 184-90.

[78] Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Race in the United States* (New York, 1981), 106, 114-15.

[79] Manning Marable, *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* (London, 1975), 166, 169; Levine, *Racial Conflict and the American Mayor*, 56-61.

task easier. First, in a one-industry town US Steel provided an obvious target, bringing community antagonism to a convenient focus. The company's callous attitude toward environmental protection merely added fuel to the fire. Second, the severity and pervasiveness of air pollution made it easy to convince diverse members of urban society that environmental reform was in their interest. Third, and perhaps most importantly, economic prosperity defused US Steel's threats about job loss. With a low unemployment rate, steelworkers did not fear that their environmental stance would cost them their jobs. The rapid collapse of the environmental coalition with the onset of recession exposed the vulnerability of lower-income groups, even as resentment toward the steel company lingered. Here again the broader historical context was crucial. Shortly after the political empowerment of lower-income groups opened the way for a more aggressive environmental agenda in Gary, the economic downturn reduced the community's leverage against industry, thereby shattering the coalition.

Although the history of environmental politics in Gary was unusual, the chronology of environmental regulation—mild measures until the late 1960s, tough, anti-corporate policies around 1970, and then a lenient approach toward industry by the mid-1970s—paralleled national trends. And while blacks and working-class whites rarely occupied leadership positions in the environmental movement, their public position often affected the outcome of national environmental controversies. The 1973 energy crisis marked a turning point in environmental politics; as the economy deteriorated environmentalists suffered a series of setbacks caused, in part, by overt opposition from trade unionists and African Americans. Driven by the promise of new jobs, the AFL-CIO, United Automobile Workers, National Oil Jobbers Council, and the Seafarers International Union of North America lobbied successfully for congressional authorization of the Trans-Alaska pipeline in 1973, a project opposed by the Wilderness Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, and Friends of the Earth. Four years later, the United Automobile Workers, frightened about layoffs, foiled environmentalists' attempts to strengthen automobile emission standards.[80] Likewise, black members of Congress who consistently backed tough environmental legislation in the early 1970s offered only lukewarm support later in the decade. Whereas in 1970 the League of Conservation Voters gave black members of

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[80] Lynton Caldwell, Lynton K. Hayes, and Isabel MacWhirter, *Citizens and the Environment: Case Studies in Popular Action* (Bloomington, 1976), 227-38; Kazis and Grossman, *Fear at Work*, 249.

the House of Representatives an average score of 90 for their environmental voting record, by 1980, the figure dropped to 77.[81]

These developments underscored the limitations of a movement restricted to affluent whites, prompting several scholars and activists to recommend a broader social foundation. In a recent book on the future of environmental politics, Robert Paehlke argued that any political program constructed around narrowly defined environmental goals will not generate the mass support necessary for political success. Environmentalists, he emphasized, must construct coalitions with those groups concerned about excessive military spending, funding for education, health, and the arts, and social justice.[82] Barry Commoner pressed the matter further by renewing the call for an anti-corporate environmental movement, claiming that such an emphasis could unite a wide array of social groups dismayed with corporate behavior, including those with concerns about racial discrimination, uneven tax burdens, and consumer safety. Commoner argued that only this sort of coalition would likely confront the production technologies employed by industry, an essential strategy for meaningful environmental reform.[83] If environmental activists do follow the path suggested by Commoner and articulate an anti-corporate environmental philosophy, they may find themselves duplicating the spirit of Gary's broad-based coalition.

[81] The highest rating given was 100. Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews, *The Almanac of American Politics: The Senators, the Representatives, their Records, States, and Districts, 1972* (1972); Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, *The Almanac of American Politics: The Senators, the Representatives, their Records, States, and Districts, 1983* (Washington, D.C., 1983).

[82] Robert Paehlke, *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* (New Haven, Conn., 1989), 276-77.

[83] Barry Commoner, "The Environment," *New Yorker*, LXIII (July, 1987), 57-69.