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Agitators: Long, Townsend, and Coughlin Versus The New Deal--1932 Through 1936

Richard L. Lunt

AGITATORS

LUNT

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AGITATORS: LONG, TOWNSEND AND COUGHLIN VERSUS THE NEW DEAL--1932 THROUGH 1936

By

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PREFACE

In the first years of the Great Depression of the 1930's there were many political agitators of a near lunatic nature whose demagogic appeal found a sympathetic ear among troubled Americans. Probably the most significant of these agitators were Huey Long, Father Charles E. Coughlin, and Dr. Francis E. Townsend. Certainly they were the only ones who succeeded in any way to promote their particular causes on a national scale. In addition, these three men, or their followers, attempted to unite into a Union Party in 1936.

If these men were of any political significance, they should have either aided or hindered, or in some manner significantly influenced the efforts of the Federal Administration. As it happened they affected the New Deal to an important extent. They helped to force the Administration to the left and to accept the concept of the welfare state as a permanent policy. Consequently, this thesis will not only describe the activities of these men on the national political scene, but it will also explain the nature of the conflict between them and the Administration and the ultimate effect of this conflict on the New Deal.

INTRODUCTION

In early 1933, when President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt was preparing to take office, the Great Depression was at its depth. Farm prices, factory production, retail trade, and stocks and bonds were all continuing the precipitous decline which had begun with the stock market crash of 1929. Unemployment had reached the fifteen million mark, an increase of two or three million over the previous summer. Farmers were using shotguns to keep their homes from being foreclosed. In the cities some unemployed white-collar workers were selling apples on street corners, but more were standing ever patiently in relief lines. Many Americans would have agreed with Senator David A. Reed of Pennsylvania when he said on the Senate floor in the spring of 1932: "I do not often envy other countries their governments, but I say that if this country ever needed a Mussolini, it needs one now."[1]

It so happened that in the wings of the American political stage there were a few potential national saviors (though not of the Mussolini class) waiting their chance. Huey Long, the acknowledged dictator of Louisiana, had made his entrance onto the national scene at the Democratic National Convention the previous June by giving strong support to the President-elect. Perhaps the Governor of

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[1]Ernest K. Lindley, Half Way with Roosevelt (New York: The Viking Press, 1937), p. 6.

Louisiana was at that time better known to the average American for having received a German naval commander while clad in green pajamas than for his social-political ideas. But within a year they were to know him equally well for his Share Our Wealth Society and the levelist philosophy it implied.

Dr. Francis E. Townsend was not to become a national figure for another twelve months, but already his Old Age Revolving Pensions plan was off to a good start in California. What bothered Dr. Townsend, as indeed Huey Long, was that there was so much poverty in an age of industrial superabundance. Since in his mind one-half of the problem was overproduction, he visualized that one-half of the solution lay in the disposal of surplus workers much as governments would dispose of surplus wheat.[2] To this end he advocated the retiring of the aged. The other half of his solution lay in giving the retired persons generous government checks which they would be forced to spend rapidly--thus opening up a guaranteed market, assuring immediate recovery and the abolition of poverty.

Father Charles E. Coughlin agreed with Dr. Townsend's superabundance in poverty analysis, but his temperament required that evils be personified. As early as 1930 he had found them at one and the same time in the communists and the bankers of Wall Street; and since 1930, he had been broadcasting this news continuously to the American people over a national network.

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[2]Dr. Francis E. Townsend, New Horizons, ed. Jesse George Murray (Chicago: J. L. Stewart Publishing Co., 1943), p. 138.

These men were not the only potential national saviors waiting for the opportunity to try out their ideas and panaceas on the country. There were others who hoped to persuade America in the 1930's to adopt the old Populist ideas like "General" Jacob S. Coxey, and "Coin" William H. Harvey. There were Southerners who combined racism with Populism like Ben Tillman, Eugene Talmadge, Tom Tom Heflin, and Pappy O'Daniel. There were fascists like William Dudley Pelley and his Silver Shirt organization or George Christian and his White Shirt Crusaders. But these men did not succeed on a national level. In contrast, Huey Long, Dr. Townsend, and Father Coughlin achieved a considerable national standing in the early years of the New Deal.

With the exception of the fascists, all these agitators were to a considerable extent in the Populist tradition of American political thought; and in that sense Huey Long, Dr. Townsend, and Father Coughlin were examples of how the Populist tradition was carried into the New Deal era. In particular, these men brought forward the Populist ideas that big business and finance should be suspected; that European socialism was subversive; and that governmental intervention, through inflationary measures, was the only way to solve the dilemma of production surplus in the midst of starvation.

But in a larger sense, these three men and their organizations were also examples of the operation of any radical mass movement. Just what a mass movement is has been discussed effectively by Eric Hoffer in his book, The True Believer. He says that a mass movement is made up of frustrated people, searching for an escape

from themselves, at the time of the breakdown of an established order. Since escape is their aim, they easily find it in processions, hatred, and the vague and impossible goals of such a movement. No mass movement, however, says Hoffer, can exist without a fanatical leader who is capable of articulating the resentment in the hearts of his followers. But once the mass movement is organized, he says it can bring about a new order if disarmed of the hungers and fears which up to that point have been its strength. If not so disarmed, the movement will degenerate into a Nazi-like society. But, if effectively disarmed, a responsible "man of action" can replace the fanatical leader and a new order can result.[3]

The movements of Huey Long, Dr. Townsend, and Father Coughlin followed this pattern, even to the point that President Roosevelt, as the "man of action," was able to capture their followers from them and establish a New Deal out of the shambles of the old.

Thus the story of these three is the story of the rise of mass movements and their eventual assimilation by the new order. But it is also the story of particularly American mass movements, which have as their heritage the Populist ideas of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Yet significantly, these movements in addition deviated noticeably from the Populist tradition--in fact they formulated and adhered to a unique set of ideas which incorporated depression conditioned concepts of the 1930's into the Populist tradition.

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[3]Eric Hoffer, The True Believer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), pp. 13-148, passim.

CHAPTER I

HUEY LONG AND SHARE THE WEALTH

State Politics

Huey Long was born on August 30, 1893, in Winnfield, Louisiana, an upstate farming community. Farming could produce only a meager income in this hill country, so it was not surprising that in the 1890's Populism engulfed Winn Parish and that in 1908 a visit by the Socialist presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, resulted in the election of half the police jurors and school trustees on the Socialist ticket. The spiritual life of Winn Parish was filled by evangelists of the Holy Roller or hard-shelled Baptist school. From them Huey Long learned the Bible, which in the future was to serve as an authority, along with William Jennings Bryan, for his Share Our Wealth ideas.[1]

Huey was a precocious youth. After a varied public school education, at the age of twenty-one he completed a three-year law course in one year and was promptly admitted to the bar. In 1918, on studying the Constitution of Louisiana, he found there was no age limit for the office of Railroad Commissioner. He ran for the office and was elected. As Commissioner, Long handed down a popular ruling

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[1]Reinard H. Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1954), pp. 237, 239.

on telephone rates which enabled him to receive enough of the rural vote to be elected governor of Louisiana in 1928.[2]

Long had been elected on a platform pledged to overthrow the "old gang" politicians of New Orleans and their allies, the corporations; to provide free textbooks, free bridges and better roads; and to enact a new occupational tax on Standard Oil.[3] This platform appeared radical to the anti-Longs, and immediately after his inauguration they began an impeachment trial against the new Governor. Their efforts failed by only a few votes, but their failure was costly, for Long was only more determined to carry out his reform program and to aspire for personal power. He said of their effort: "I used to try to get things done by saying 'please.' That didn't work and now I am a dynamiter. I dynamite 'em out of my path!"[4] His method was to appeal to the people. For example, when the legislature refused to pass his highway bond bill, he scattered the road appropriations available in five or ten mile sections throughout the parishes. He then went to the people as a United States Senatorial Candidate in 1930 on the platform of better

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[2] Huey P. Long, Every Man a King; the Autobiography of Huey P. Long (New Orleans: National Book Co., Inc., 1933), pp. 2-102, passim.

[3] Allan P. Sindler, Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 54.

[4] Ibid., p. 67.

roads. His method worked, for he was elected to the Senate, and the legislature backed down and agreed to pass Long's entire welfare program.[5] Long was not to assume his Senate office until 1932, but that was the condition under which he was elected.

By the end of 1934 this youthful politician had browbeaten Louisiana into acceptance of a dictatorial regime. Perhaps the climax was reached in the November session of the Louisiana legislature in which forty-four bills were introduced and passed by both houses within six hours. These bills gave Long the power to appoint every police officer in the state, to control all public utilities, to distribute all patronage in New Orleans, and to impose taxes on business property at will. However, some measures were designed to increase Long's popularity with the masses and not to increase his power directly. For example, he reduced auto license fees and taxes, abolished the one dollar poll tax, and enacted a two-year debt moratorium law. All this legislation was passed in response to an overwhelming vote of confidence Long had received in the November state-wide election. There is no doubt that Long's intimidation of New Orleans with state troops helped to assure his victory in the city. But it was also true that Long was very popular in every rural parish in Louisiana and that even in New Orleans the corruption of the "old gang" was enough to repulse the urban voter in favor of him.[6]

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[5]Long, pp. 201-236, passim.

[6]The New York Times, August 20, 1934, p. 1.

Huey Long's success was due to the Democratic Party's mistake in the then recent past of not serving the lower-class whites. Long captured their resentment against the conservative planters and urban upper classes, and then used their support to turn the state into a dictatorship. Since his rural supporters were not unused to an undemocratic and corrupt rule under the old regime, they were willing to tolerate an expert in undemocratic rule as long as he gave them roads, schools, debt moratoriums, and a target at which to aim their frustrations--the corporations.[7]

Long also was a very different type of demagogue than Eugene Talmadge of Georgia or Ben Tillman of South Carolina, for he avoided "nigger-baiting." It was not that he was tolerant; it was rather that he chose to base his support on a doctrine of wider appeal than racial distinction. Thus his Share Our Wealth Society was not closed to negroes, not even in Louisiana. Long, in short, was appealing to the same person the New Deal appealed to. For most other southern demagogues the New Deal was too far to the left.[8]

National Politics

On May 3, 1932, prompted by Senators George W. Norris and Burton K. Wheeler, Huey Long came out for Franklin D. Roosevelt for

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[7] Sindler, pp. 22, 40, 41.

[8] Ibid., pp. 112-14.

party nominee in the 1932 election.[9] After his announced support, the Democratic high command looked to Long as one of the key men in the convention, and Long's activities at the convention on Roosevelt's behalf bore out their trust.[10] The Roosevelt forces could count on 663 votes at the opening of the convention, but they needed 768 out of 1,154 votes in order to get F. D. R. nominated under the two-thirds rule then operating. According to Edward J. Flynn, the future White House adviser, after the all-night session in which the third ballot failed to decide a candidate, the Roosevelt strategists were concerned about holding their pledged delegates in line. In particular, Arkansas was wavering and was anxious to break the unit rule (then binding the delegation to Roosevelt) in order to permit the delegates to support whatever candidate they wished.

Arkansas's breaking away from the Roosevelt camp would have been particularly damaging because its vote would have been registered early in the balloting. At that point the convention might have stampeded to a dark horse candidate. Largely due to the efforts of Huey Long, the Arkansas delegation held to the unit rule, as did Mississippi which was also threatening to break its Roosevelt pledge. Flynn claimed Long shook his fist at Harrison and threatened: "If you break the rule, you so-and-so, I'll go into Mississippi and break

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[9] Long, p. 289; The New York Times, May 22, 1932, IX, p. 2.

[10] Elliot Roosevelt (ed.), F. D. R. His Personal Letters 1928-1945 (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1950) Vol. 3, p. 200.

you!"[11] In Flynn's mind there was no question but that it would have been impossible for Roosevelt to have been nominated without the assistance of Huey Long.[12]

After the convention victory Long was most anxious to retain the national prestige he had gained and asked the Democratic National Committee to provide him with a special train for a nation-wide campaign. The plan was "unthinkable" to Farley and he told Huey that the National Committee had substituted a less ambitious schedule which it wished to have him fill. After some complaint, Long agreed. The revised schedule included a speaking tour in the Central West--the Dakotas, Kansas, and Nebraska. Farley stated that this campaign swing of Long's opened the eyes of the Roosevelt high command to the tremendous appeal Huey had with the masses. Furthermore, he said that the party leaders were all agreed that if they had sent Long into the populous cities of the Pennsylvania mining districts, the electoral vote of the Keystone State would have been comfortably in Roosevelt's favor.[13]

Long had supported F. D. R. during the campaign only with reluctance, and by the time the "first hundred days" were over, he was convinced that he had been deceived by the President. This

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[11] Edward J. Flynn, You're the Boss (New York: The Viking Press, 1947), p. 101.

[12] Ibid., p. 101.

[13] James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots; the Personal History of a Politician (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1938), pp. 170-71.

belief, combined with his ambition to extend his power beyond the boundaries of Louisiana, led to a complete break with the Administration by the end of 1933. In November of that year he wrote:

> I am so constituted that I can hardly go half way on men and measures--I have to go one way or the other--for or against.
> In 1932 I thought I understood Roosevelt. I saw in him our chance for a man who would decentralize wealth . . . .
> In 1933 . . . the masters of finance who have ruined this country began to crow from the roof of the White House . . .[14]

Huey Long assumed his Senate seat for the first time in January, 1932. In his first days he expressed the awe appropriate to a junior Senator in this deliberative body by saying:

> . . . I discovered it to be composed of 96 men of varied and sundry political complexions, informed on all subjects and questions, separately and collectively, far better than I had ever expected any ninety odd men to be.[15]

But in not too many weeks he found his chair in the back of the chamber too far removed from the center of activity and began his revolt against the Administration and the Democratic leadership in the Senate. Even at the height of his power, Senator Long controlled only three seats in the Senate (Senator John H. Overton's and his own from Louisiana and Senator Hattie Caraway's from Arkansas), yet he managed, by appealing to public opinion, by allying with particular blocs of Senators, and by using the filibuster privilege to delay and modify Administration legislation to a significant degree.

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[14] American Progress, November 2, 1933.

[15] Long, p. 287.

His success was attributed primarily to his intelligence and his uncanny parliamentary ability. Perhaps the explanation for his parliamentary ability lay in his intense intellectual interest in law, which in the past had been revealed in his excellent Supreme Court briefs. Even Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Justice Louis D. Brandeis had praised his legal talents.[16] In any case, Long was unequalled in his time for his shrewd actions on the Senate floor. Alben W. Barkley, Senator, said:

> Huey, in debate, was like a horsefly: he would light on part of you, sting you, and then, when you slapped at him, fly away to land elsewhere and sting again. He took particular delight in attempting to bedevil the Vice-President, and it was widely known that Garner had little patience with his methods and tactics.[17]

A firm advocate for the monetization of silver, Long pressed for the passage of silver legislation throughout his Senatorial career. The first major clash over silver came when he joined Senator Burton K. Wheeler in proposing an amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act (1933) for the free coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one of gold. The Administration was opposed to this old Populist financial scheme and, on April 17, 1933, defeated the amendment forty-four to thirty-three. However, the Administration was only

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[16] Raymond Gram Swing, "A Monarch in Pajamas II," The Nation, CXL (January 16, 1935), p. 70.

[17] Alben W. Barkley, That Reminds Me (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1954), p. 159.

able to defeat the amendment with the aid of several inflationist Senators, and thus moved quickly to pacify them. On April 19, F. D. R. officially took the United States off the gold standard, and advocated the passage of an amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act (eventually to be known as the Thomas amendment) which would permit the President to do any or all of three measures: (1) to coin silver at a ratio of sixteen to one, (2) to issue paper money, (3) to change the gold content of the dollar.[18] The President actually tried the last provision. As Great Britain had gone off the gold standard in 1931, he hoped that revaluation in the United States would lead to a rise in prices and an increase in foreign trade. After April 19, he announced the gold export embargo and allowed the dollar to float in the exchange markets to find its own level. When no sustained recovery followed, he tried bidding up the price of gold. This policy failed, and in 1934 the Administration changed its course and requested Congress to stabilize the dollar at a new value in terms of gold.

In the Second Session of the Seventy-Third Congress, Long and other silverites succeeded in pushing the enactment of the Silver Purchase Act of 1934. Long had proposed the implementation of the Thomas Amendment provision for the free coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one, but this feature failed to pass. So the final bill

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[18] Joseph E. Reeve, Monetary Reform Movements; a Survey of Recent Plans and Panaceas (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1943), pp. 38-9.

was stripped of the most important silver feature.[19] The measure declared it was the policy of the United States to increase the proportion of silver in the monetary stocks to the level at which one-fourth of the monetary stocks would be in silver. The Secretary of Treasury, as requested by the legislation, thereupon began a silver purchase program. By 1935 the purchase program was recognized to be a failure, and the Treasury withdrew most of its price support at that time. With the failure of the silver purchase policy, the Silver Bloc was seriously weakened and was unable to secure favorable legislation again during Roosevelt's First Administration.[20]

In 1935 Long made another attempt to force a firm policy on silver purchase. Allied with Senator Elmer Thomas he achieved initial success when the Senate adopted their amendment to the Work-Relief Bill which would have required (1) the payment of maturing international obligations by issuance of silver certificates against all silver bullion in the Treasury and (2) additional mandatory silver purchases. However, while Long was out of town the Administration substituted an amendment in conference which (1) gave discretionary authority for the exchange of gold for silver and the acceptance of silver on international balances, and (2) eliminated additional mandatory silver purchases. Then

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[19] U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 10, 11049.

[20] Reeve, p. 110.

the Work-Relief Bill, with this weak silver amendment, was rushed through the Senate before Long returned.[21]

Long's banking policy was in agreement with his silver views in that it also was inflationary. Before Roosevelt was inaugurated, the lame duck session of Congress, meeting in January, attempted to reform the banking institutions by severing banks from security affiliates, and by restricting the use of Federal Reserve credit for stock market speculation. Long joined Senators Burton K. Wheeler and Elmer Thomas in opposing the bill (eventually the Glass-Steagall Banking Act) until provisions were included which would have aided the unemployed, the farmer and evicted home owners. They failed to obtain the adoption of more liberal provisions, but they did delay the passage of the bill by fifteen days.[22] After Roosevelt's inauguration, Long discovered that the Administration's banking policy was again much too conservative. Long objected to Roosevelt's bank holiday decree in March because he had closed too many banks.[23] As for the reform, outlined in the Banking Act of 1933, Long desired more immediate governmental control over the Federal Reserve Board by permitting the Secretary of the Treasury to sit as a member of the Board.[24] He also

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[21] Ibid., 106.

[22] Forrest Davis, Huey Long; A Candid Biography (New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1935), p. 179.

[23] U. S., Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1933, LXVII, Part 2, 2211.

[24] The New York Times, January 24, 1933, p. 5.

wanted state banks to receive the benefits of the Banking Act--in particular the provision which guaranteed deposits. This feature finally was included by Congress through Long's help and over the objections of the Treasury.[25] The Act, as finally passed, included provisions for guaranteeing deposits, for the divorce of commercial and investment banking, and for a reorganization of the Federal Reserve System to give the governors more control over the credit system of the country.

Along with other inflationists, Long continually demanded the payment of the veteran's bonus. He soon climbed on the bandwagon for the passage of the Patman Bonus Bill, which would have required the government to print money in order to pay off its veteran obligation. In the First Session of the Seventy-Fourth Congress (1935) the Patman Bill passed both houses of Congress, but F. D. R. promptly vetoed it and called for a joint session of Congress to hear his veto message. Long thereupon defied the President by beginning a one man filibuster designed to prevent the calling of the joint session. After talking for five hours he made the parliamentary mistake of leaving the chamber during a quorum call. A point of order was at once made and sustained to the effect that Long had surrendered the floor.[26]

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[25] Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., Part 5, 4839.

[26] Franklin L. Burdette, Filibustering in the Senate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 182.

After the veto message was delivered the House immediately repassed the Patman Bill over the veto. The Senate split their vote between the Patman Bill and a rival, the Vinson Bonus Bill, which would have borrowed the funds for the payment of the bonus. Long, with the assistance of Senator Elmer Thomas, gained a partial victory when he successfully tabled the Vinson Bill--enabling a vote to be taken on the Patman Bill in the next session of Congress.[27] At the next session the Vinson Bill was finally passed, although over a presidential veto.

Part of Long's strategy was to gain the leadership of the discontented agrarian-inflationary bloc in the Senate. By 1935 his position as a leader was accepted, even if few Congressmen would acknowledge it publically. It was perhaps due to his successful effort in 1934 to get the Frazier-Lemke Bill passed which enabled him to become head of the restless and critical agrarian-inflationary bloc. Following the precedent of the Minnesota mortgage moratorium case, Senator Lynn J. Frazier and Representative William Lemke proposed their act. It permitted a six and one-half year moratorium on farm mortgages, provided the farmer paid a fair rental each year as determined by the courts. The bill approached final vote in the closing hours of the session, and Long took advantage of the pressure

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[27] Pendleton Herring, "First Session of the Seventy-Fourth Congress," The American Political Science Review, XXIX, No. 6 (December, 1935), p. 994.

of time in order to force it through. He did so by filibustering until the conference report was voted on in the Senate. Since other vital Administration measures needed to be acted upon, the Senate leaders had to agree to permit a vote on the Frazier-Lemke Bill in order to interrupt Long's filibuster.[28] The final vote was for the moratorium law. The President signed it with reluctance. Later the Supreme Court was to declare the law unconstitutional.

Long's obstructionism in the Senate reached a climax in the First Session of the Seventy-Fourth Congress (1935). His efforts on behalf of the silver interests and his defiance of the President in the face of his Bonus message have already been related. But by opposing the Work-Relief Bill, Long was taking the Administration head-on. The Work-Relief measure was a new weapon in the arsenal of the Administration--being designed to put the unemployed to work instead of maintaining them in relief lines. Its importance was even greater in the face of the accepted failure of the National Industrial Recovery Act, which soon was to have its official demise declared by the Supreme Court. An important feature of the Work-Relief Bill was the low wage scale which was deliberately placed below the prevailing wage in order not to compete with private industry. Huey Long disagreed with the Administration on the value of this provision, and succeeded, on February 23, 1935, in getting the Senate to adopt the McCarran prevailing-wage amendment, which would have required the government

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[28] American Progress, August 7, 1934.

to pay the standard wages in a given community. The Administration was unwilling to accept the McCarran amendment and forced the measure back to committee until it had enough strength to overcome the opposition headed by Long.[29] For a month and a half the Administration vied with Long. When the Senate leaders tried to put pressure on a few crucial Senators to switch their votes, Long countered:

> I see by the newspapers that some votes are being switched on the prevailing wage amendment. I resent anyone calling on anybody for a trade without calling on me first . . . . I might cut the price a little bit.[30]

In the month and a half of jockeying for support, Long had nowhere to turn but to public opinion in order to counteract the Administration's pressure tactics. The use of public opinion was a common tactic of the Senator. In this instance, when it appeared that the McCarran amendment was about to be voted on again, Long filibustered a War Department appropriation bill in order to delay action until the following Monday--before this day Long's ally, the Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, who had millions of Americans in his loyal radio audience, was to give his Sunday radio address in favor of the McCarran amendment.[31] However, in the end the Administration won, and the final bill known as the Works Progress Administration was passed on April 8, without the McCarran prevailing-wage amendment.

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[29] The New York Times, February 26, 1935, p. 1.

[30] James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 220.

[31] The New York Times, March 9, 1935, p. 9.

In general, Huey Long was in favor of the Social Security Act, but in August, 1935, when the time came to vote for the supplementary appropriation bill which was to get the Social Security Act underway, he filibustered the appropriation bill to death. The Senate leaders had made a grave tactical error by unwisely setting a definite adjournment date before the supplementary appropriation bill was passed, and Long was able to capitalize on their error.[32] Long's immediate reason for the filibuster was his desire to get passed a bill which would guarantee cotton and wheat farmers minimum prices for their crops.[33] But perhaps the real reason for the filibuster was the complete breakdown of relations between the White House and Long; his opposition to this welfare measure was so petty that it gave the appearance of being designed solely to embarrass the President.

Many Americans had become dissatisfied with the operation of the National Industrial Recovery Act, but the Administration remained firm in the belief that the Act was a good one and asked Congress for its extension. Long seized the opportunity to speak for a popular cause by filibustering the bill requesting the extension. His efforts did not go unnoticed, and this occasion set a new individual endurance record for filibustering--fifteen and one-half hours. He was interrupted by only two roll calls to establish a quorum and by occasional questions. Sipping milk and eating candy for nourishment, he gleefully tossed

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[32] Ibid., August 29, 1935, p. 1.

[33] Burdette, p. 187.

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[32] Ibid., August 29, 1935, p. 1.

[33] Sundays, p. 197.

chocolate caramels to Senators nearby. Never lagging in vigor, he lashed out at the N. I. R. A. to the end: "What is that they are talking about putting back on the books. N. R. A.--Nuts Running America. N. R. A.--Never Roosevelt Again."[34]

The immediate issue Long was concerned with was that of patronage. He wanted the Senate to be able to confirm the appointments of all personnel in the N. R. A. receiving more than $4,000 per year in salary.[35] But as in the case of the Social Security appropriation bill, Long's opposition appeared designed primarily to embarrass the President and to draw attention to Huey Long who was having Presidential aspirations of his own at this time.

The Share Our Wealth Society

Huey Long's obstructionism in the Senate was serious, but it remained obstructionism rather than blockade for the power of the Administration was still stronger. The Senator could only delay the passage of important legislation by his tactics. However, there was the possibility of his power increasing, and this was of great concern to the White House. The organization Long planned to use for attaining national prominence and power was the Share Our Wealth Society which he created in 1934.

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[34] Ibid., p. 184.

[35] Ibid., p. 183.

The idea of sharing the wealth was probably first formulated in Long's mind as a result of his association with State Senator H. J. Harper of Louisiana. In 1918, Harper was indicted under the Federal Espionage Act for writing a pamphlet opposing American participation in the war and calling for conscription of wealth as well as men. Long, defending Harper and accepting at face value what he was advocating, argued that:

> War should be supported by a conscription of war profits and certain amounts of swollen fortunes, as well as conscription of men, or the country will face financial slavery. Ten per cent of the people own seventy per cent of the wealth.[36]

In the years following his association with Harper, the fact of unequal distribution of wealth became almost an obsession with Long. It seemed to him that all the evils in the world could be explained by the existence of this basic inequality. In his autobiography he said:

> I foresaw the depression in 1929 . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> When the fortune-holders of America grew powerful enough that one per cent of the people owned nearly everything, [and] ninety-nine per cent of the people owned practically nothing, not even enough to pay their debts, a collapse was at hand.[37]

The Share Our Wealth Plan was subject to considerable alteration, but the official version as given in the Society guidebook was as follows:

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[36] Luthin, p. 240.

[37] Long, p. 209.

1. To limit poverty by providing that every deserving family shall share in the wealth of America for not less than one-third of the average wealth, thereby to possess not less than $5,000 free of debt.
2. To limit fortunes to such a few million dollars as will allow the balance of the American people to share in the wealth and profits of the land.
3. Old Age Pensions of $30 per month to persons over 60 years of age who do not earn as much as $1,000 per year or who possess less than $10,000 in cash or property, thereby to remove from the field of labor, in times of unemployment, those who have contributed their share to the public service.
4. To limit the hours of work to such an extent as to prevent over-production and to give the workers of America some share in the recreations, conveniences and luxuries of life.
5. To balance agricultural production with what can be sold and consumed according to the laws of God, which have never failed.
6. To care for the Veterans of our wars.
7. Taxation to run the government to be supported, first, by reducing big fortunes from the top, thereby to improve the country and provide employment in public works whenever agricultural surplus is such as to render unnecessary, in whole or in part, any particular crop.[38]

In his fanciful and romantic book, My First Days in the White House, Huey Long discussed in more detail how the redistribution of wealth was to take place. Through a capital levy tax, private fortunes were to be reduced to one or two million dollars. The property confiscated by this tax was to serve as the basis for additional currency which was to be distributed among the people. However, the surplus wealth expropriated from the corporations was to be turned into the form of securities, which a federal "Share Our Wealth Corporation" was to hold in trust for the benefit of the

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[38]Huey P. Long, Share Our Wealth; Every Man a King (Washington, D. C.: Huey P. Long, 1935), p. 1.

people--i.e., the corporation itself was to issue stock which was to be given to the citizens. But only non-voting securities were to be turned over to the "Share Our Wealth Corporation." Thus private ownership was to be retained. Further, Long was not interested in breaking up the large corporations, for he was only concerned with efficiency of production and the sharing of wealth, not with decentralization.[39]

The mythical Share Our Wealth era which Long wrote of was to come into being with his election as President. Long envisioned himself to be a savior called upon by every faction in American political life to solve the ever-increasing depression. Since his election was to be due only to the severity of the crisis, it was fitting that he chose a coalition cabinet made up of William E. Borah, James Couzens, Al Smith, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Herbert Hoover.[40] At his bidding, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was to rush to the White House to head a committee for the redistribution of wealth.[41]

President Long was to be faced with a rebellion in one state against his Share Our Wealth program, but a quick flight to the scene and a brilliant speech on his part quieted the mob before the state capitol. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court was considering the constitutionality of the Share Our Wealth legislation, and a favorable decision

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[39]Huey Pierce Long, My First Days in the White House (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Telegraph Press, 1935), pp. 96-7, 113, 144-45.

[40]Ibid., p. 47.

[41]Ibid., p. 135.

was reached in time to vindicate Long and disarm all opposition.[42]

As a result of the Share Our Wealth policies the nation underwent an immediate transformation, perhaps as dramatic a one as was presented in Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward. The Mayo~~r~~ brothers, William J. and Charles H., were to be called on by Long to head a program of preventive and curative medical care for all Americans. Punative justice was to be outlawed, and sociologists and psychiatrists were to review every sentence given out by the courts.[43] In short, President Long brought to America a land of plenty where everyone was to own a car, a radio, and a home; where financial crisis did not exist; and where the miracle of the machine did all the work, leaving the individual free to profit by his leisure time. As one pro-Long commentator wrote: ". . . it's almost as if the Lord had walked through our land--feeding the hungry, teaching the ignorant, comforting the sick, plucking the greed and envy and malice out of our hearts."[44]

The specific measures Long was to enact in his mythical Presidential term included: (1) a $10,000,000,000 engineering program of flood control and irrigation, (2) the establishment of Father Coughlin's central bank plan, in which the people elected the directors, (3) the federal control, and if necessary federal ownership, of all transportation for the benefit of the people, (4) federal aid to

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[42] Ibid., p. 135.

[43] Ibid., pp. 54, 60.

[44] American Progress, May, 1935.

education,[45] (5) a thirty-hour work week and an eleven-month work year, and (6) a moratorium on all debts until the income of the people rose to the point when they could resume payment.[46]

While Senator Long drew up his Share Our Wealth proposals into various bills, they never received more than fourteen votes in the upper house.[47] At the time of vote his bills received either scathing criticism or laughter from his colleagues. But the Senate reception didn't affect to any degree the feeling of the large segment of the public which was ready to accept his claims at face value.

Share the wealth was in the Populist heritage which had been wrestling with the problem of want in an economy of abundance for many years. Like other political mavericks in this tradition, Long also turned to prestige authorities to find support for his ideas. Probably the most important authority in Long's view was the Bible. He freely quoted from numerous passages, but perhaps his most popular one was Leviticus, Chapter Twenty-Five:

> And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his family.[48]

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[45]Long, My First Days . . ., pp. 25, 46, passim.

[46]U. S., Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935, LXXIX, Part 1, pp. 411-12.

[47]Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 1st Sess., Part 4, p. 3329.

[48]Long, Share Our Wealth . . ., p. 18.

Again, like his predecessors, Long felt free to help himself to the successful pet schemes of contemporary agitators, in this case Father Coughlin and Dr. Townsend. He claimed that Coughlin's central bank scheme would be one of the first measures he would enact upon being elected President.[49] He also borrowed Dr. Townsend's pension plan, and as Dr. Townsend's appeal increased, so did the size of Long's monthly planned pensions.[50]

Long was shrewd enough to make a distinction between his Share Our Wealth plan and socialism. The latter, he said, did not propose a redistribution of wealth, but rather a national ownership of wealth, or the destruction of wealth. The Share Our Wealth plan, he said, advocated a preservation of wealth through its redistribution.[51] Long was clearly making only a semantic difference, but it was important nevertheless. He was aware that the American political tradition rejected European political ideas as a general rule, and thus he attempted to place his roots in the myth of a free and progressive America. As Forrest Davis said:

> Huey's appeal is tribal. He speaks the authentic accents of an older, underlying America. In his leveling ideas, his belief in the surviving virtues of free economic enterprise--within limits--as well as in his exaggerated humor, shattering vulgarity and zest puncturing pretensiousness, Huey is a son of the frontier.[52]

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[49] Supra, p. 25.

[50] Infra, p. 32.

[51] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 9, p. 10148.

[52] Davis, p. 293.

The utopia advocated by Long was left deliberately vague. He outlined only in general how his new state was to function, for he wished to let individual imaginations fill in the details as to how the utopia would satisfy individual desires. The omission of civil rights was significant, however. Apparently the citizens of his nation of tomorrow would have had only the right to be materially satisfied and not the right to question the wisdom of the state. This was certainly the situation in Louisiana. Long never advertised the fact that he was dictator, but his henchman, Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, not only admitted the fact, but justified it.

> It is the dictatorship of the surgical theater. The surgeon is recognized as being in charge because he knows. Everyone defers to him for that reason only. The nurses and assistants do what he tells them, asking no questions. They jump at his commands. They are not servile, they believe in the surgeon. They realize he is working for the welfare of the patient.[53]

There was no reason to believe Long would have changed his methods had his utopia come into being nationally, and knowing the ambition he was possessed with, there would have been good reason to expect the gradual accumulation of power until every phase of political life was controlled by him.

Long never let the public sense this dictatorial element. Instead he made his followers feel that they would be the ones to gain power. Operating from this assumption he composed and sang the following song to his radio audiences:

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[53]Raymond Gram Swing, Forerunners of American Fascism (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1935), p. 73.

Every Man a King

Why weep or slumber, America?
  Land of the brave and true,
With castles, clothing, and food for all,
  All belong to you.

Ev'ry man a king, ev'ry man a king,
  For you can be a millionaire;
But there's something belonging to others,
  There's enough for all people to share.

When it's sunny June or December too,
  Or in the Winter time or Spring,
  There'll be peace without end,
Every neighbor a friend,
  With ev'ry man a king.[54]

The February 15, 1934, issue of Long's American Progress announced that the Senator was forming a Share Our Wealth Society which was to have branches in every community. It was not until a year later that actual direction was given to the local societies from the central office of the Long organization. At that time a pamphlet was published which surprisingly gave only scanty advice to the local units. It recommended the establishment of only two committees: a new member committee and a new society organizing committee which was to go into other communities and start additional Share Our Wealth units. The pamphlet also urged that no dues be collected by the local unit. All expenses, it said, should be avoided by obtaining gratis the services the society needed. Although the pamphlet suggested open and weekly meetings, no particular program was recommended to the local societies. It was of course assumed that the

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[54]Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 9, p. 411.

need for sharing the wealth of the few among all the people would be thoroughly discussed, and the pamphlet was filled with quotations from the Bible, famous persons, and government reports to aid the discussion along those lines.[55]

Obviously the Share Our Wealth clubs were public opinion molders and nothing more. In fact, Long advised the units that they should make their primary mission the dissemination of propaganda and the application of grass roots pressure on Congressmen.[56] The Society was not broken up into political cadre units on a hierarchical basis. There was no ritual which the units were to adhere to. There was no national convention to solidify the Society. Thus, it did not meet all the criteria of a mass movement as defined by Eric Hoffer.[57] Conceivably Long could have made the Society into a true mass movement designed to catapult him to the Presidency if he had so desired. However, he was assassinated before any such intentions were revealed.

As merely a public opinion machine the Share Our Wealth Society was valuable to Long. At its height Long claimed to have 27,431 clubs (mainly concentrated in the South and North Central States) and 7,000,000 members.[58] In an effort to spur membership he made it as easy as possible to join and to form local clubs. All one had to do to

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[55]Long, Share Our Wealth . . . , pp. 2-20.

[56]Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 2, p. 2088.

[57]Supra, pp. 3-4.

[58]Sindler, p. 85; Carleton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1935), p. 292.

start a club was to fill out a form, printed in the American Progress, with one's name and address as president and the names and addresses of other officers and members. There was no restriction as to the size of the unit.[59] Also, Long publicized that he was distributing free "Share Our Wealth Society" and "Every Man a King" buttons to anyone who would write to him for them.[60]

The central office for the Society was Long's Senate office in Washington, D. C. There he had a staff which sometimes numbered as many as twenty-two. He received from 3,000 to 10,000 letters a day, in contrast to the reported figure of seventy per day for the average Senator.[61] There were very practical reasons for having the Society directed from Washington. First of all, his Senatorial frank underwrote his movement about $500,000 a year.[62] Secondly, by reading his propaganda material into the Congressional Record, he was able to have it printed at government expense--though Long denied that the government was paying for his material.[63]

Long's lieutenant in the movement was Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith. He was a preacher descending from four generations of circuit

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[59] American Progress, February 15, 1934.

[60] Ibid., March 1, 1934.

[61] Ibid., February 1, 1935.

[62] The New York Times, September 22, 1935, IV, p. 11.

[63] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, p. 412.

riders and rural ministers. Before joining Huey Long he had been serving a wealthy Disciples of Christ church in Shreveport, Louisiana.[64] Preaching largely in the South, Smith's efforts significantly increased the membership of the Society.[65] Smith looked on himself as a professional rabble-rouser--ever willing to admit that his speeches were solely designed to exploit the mob. When he found, for example, that the original thirty dollar a month Share Our Wealth pension was not attracting enough attention, because Dr. Townsend was offering his followers $200 a month, he replaced, with Long's concurrence, their thirty dollar figure with the word "adequate" and thereby permitted each hearer to think his own amount.[66]

The newspaper, American Progress, was the Share Our Wealth Society organ. It was published irregularly from August, 1933, through October, 1936, and was distributed free to members of the Society.[67] The newspaper was a weekly for a few months, then a monthly. In keeping with Long's assertion of independence from big business, it carried no advertising. The paper was well-edited, providing its readers with foreign and domestic news, cheesecake, fashion, feature articles, and political cartoons. Owned by Long's close friends, the

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[64] The New York Times, October 25, 1936, IV, p. 2.

[65] Beals, p. 292.

[66] Ibid., p. 314.

[67] Sindler, p. 85.

newspaper publicized his personal battles in Louisiana and in Washington. Although the publication became vitriolic--especially as the conflict with F. D. R. heightened--the American Progress did not stoop to "nigger-baiting" or anti-semitism which oftentimes tended to be the fare of other extremist publications of the 1930's. How influential the newspaper was outside of Louisiana is difficult to determine. However, its irregularity in publishing indicated that it was not wholly successful.

The radio was a more important medium for Long. Not only did his hearty personality transmit well over the airways, but the assured audience of a national network introduced him to many new potential followers. From March through July of 1935 the Senator made at least four network broadcasts.[68] This was the period when he was in greatest conflict with the Administration, and consequently, this was the time when he was most popular and most effective.

But Long's best medium for publicity was the Senate floor. There he held up vital legislation by means of colorful filibustering and thereby guaranteed himself front page publicity. It was primarily by exploiting this opportunity that he advertised his Society and made himself a powerful opponent to the Administration.

A Political Maverick

In 1935 Long was at the height of his power and began to attack

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[68] American Progress, March, 1935; April, 1935; July, 1935; Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 7, p. 7048.

F. D. R. and his advisers on a personal basis. For example, on May 2, 1935, he gave a radio address entitled "St. Vitus Dance Government," in which he assailed Roosevelt for not keeping his promise to break up big fortunes. He added that the government was going into debt slaughtering hogs, shooting cattle, and plowing up cotton, while people starved and were only half-clothed.[69] In June 1935 a half-page cartoon in the American Progress depicted "pirate Roosevelt" robbing "the ship of state" from his vessel, the Nourmahal, owned by Vincent Astor and manned by J. P. Morgan and Bernard M. Baruch. In the same issue another headline read: "Roosevelt Driving U. S. Straight Into Communism Worse than Russia with Morgan Still the Top Dog."[70]

Long roundly attacked F. D. R. in general terms, but he dared not openly accuse him for lack of good faith in the discharge of his office. However, a cabinet rank officer was not as immune to this type of fire. Therefore, on February 11, 1935, Long demanded that "ringmaster" Farley resign as Postmaster General and as head of the Democratic National Committee. He then proposed the adoption of a resolution asking for an investigation of Farley on the basis of alleged profiteering in the award of private contracts for the building of post offices. He in particular asked for the transmission to the

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[69] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 7, p. 7048.

[70] American Progress, June, 1935.

Senate of any reports of investigations on Farley conducted by the Department of the Interior.[71] The exceptionally honest Harold L. Ickes had made a routine check on Farley, but since the investigation revealed nothing, Roosevelt decided Long's resolution should be permitted to go through.[72] The resolution was thereupon submitted to the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads for their deliberation as to the need for an investigation. Throughout the session Long harangued the Senate with accusations against Farley substantiated only by newspaper articles or affidavits from informers of questionable reliability. Finally, on March 14, 1935, the Senate, on the recommendation of the Post Office Committee, voted on party lines not to investigate Farley. The Republicans on the committee agreed with the majority that there was no prima facie evidence demanding an investigation; but they dissented in that, as wide-spread circulation of the charges had created suspicion in the public mind, they felt an investigation should be made.[73] Farley felt strongly that Long attacked him in order to indirectly damage the President's prestige. He quoted the Senator as saying to an acquaintance of Farley's: "Jim was the biggest rooster in the yard, and I thought if I could break his legs, the rest would be easy."[74]

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[71] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 2, p. 1782.

[72] Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes. Vol. I: the First Thousand Days, 1933-1936 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 294.

[73] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 7, p. 7441.

[74] James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: the Roosevelt Years (New York: Whittlesey House. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1948), p. 50.

Concurrent with his assault on Farley, Long set out after two Democratic stalwarts in the Senate: Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, Senate party leader, and Pat Harrison of Mississippi. Both men were up for re-election in 1936, and Long was planning to use his Share Our Wealth organization in the two states to defeat the Senators. He had in fact moved the Louisiana election ahead from November to January of 1936 for the express purpose of leaving himself free to campaign against them.[75] On the Senate floor in a speech directed at Robinson, he said: "Now I would sound another warning to the Senator from Arkansas . . . Beware! Beware! If things go on as they have been going on, you will not be here next year."[76] Robinson in anger replied:

> Month after month the Senator from Louisiana has disgusted this body with repeated attacks upon men who are superior to him, with repeated efforts to discredit the President and humiliate him; and now it is about time that the manhood in the Senate should assert itself.[77]

Perhaps the action Robinson had in mind was a restriction on the historical right of filibuster. The New York Times reported at the 1935 Congressional session that Robinson, with Presidential and Vice-Presidential support, was planning to limit one-man debate in 1936. The chances for passing this restriction on debate were considered good, but the death of Long in September of 1935 eliminated the need for this action.[78]

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[75] The New York Times, February 26, 1935, p. 1.

[76] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 3, p. 2938.

[77] Ibid., p. 2945.

[78] The New York Times, August 29, 1935, p. 1.

The President was also planning to help Harrison and Robinson in the 1936 campaigns. In August 1935, F. D. R. had scheduled a speech at Little Rock to aid Robinson and was considering a speech in Mississippi to assist Harrison. In the Senate, Long commented that he didn't know the President had conceded to him a territory so large, but that he, Long, was more than willing to take the President on.[79] Raymond Moley, in concurrence, said that the Democratic strategists fully expected Long to defeat Robinson and Harrison in 1936 and in fact make himself the political master of the whole, vast Lower Mississippi Valley--perhaps even of great stretches of the West.[80]

This Democratic view was not far-fetched, for in 1932 Long had demonstrated his strength in Arkansas very convincingly. During the Congressional session of that year, Long had been continually at odds with Senator Robinson, and to spite him entered the Arkansas primary campaign by supporting a party black sheep, Mrs. Hattie Caraway, for the other Arkansas Senate seat. Prior to his support she had been expected to receive the fewest number of votes in a field of five contenders. However, one week of campaigning on Long's part enabled her to poll more votes than her combined opposition.[81] The campaign was of a kind made famous by Long. Using the sound truck, which he

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[79] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 11, p. 12477.

[80] Raymond Moley, After Seven Years (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 305.

[81] Long, Every Man a King . . . , p. 313.

claimed to have invented, he went into the back country and appealed to the rural vote, where his Share Our Wealth ideas found a welcome reception.

In the summer of 1935 Huey Long announced to his Senate colleagues that he intended to run for President in 1936 even if he had to wreck the Democratic Party. He realized that he was not strong enough to be elected in 1936. Therefore, his primary purpose in 1936 was to so weaken the Democratic Party that he would have a chance of being elected President in 1940. With this in mind, he planned first of all to enter presidential primaries wherever he had an opportunity of disaffecting enough voters to influence the general election, even if he was not able to win. However, he intended to begin his primary challenge in Louisiana where he would have been sure to win by a five-to-one majority. Secondly, should the Democratic National Convention refuse to seat his delegates, Long planned to bolt the convention and run as an independent and at the same time get self-nominated as a regular Democratic candidate by civil suit in as many states as possible. Thirdly, he was prepared to throw all possible support in strategic localities to the Republican nominee in the South in return for Republican support in the North and West for Share Our Wealth Congressional candidates.[82]

There is reasonable evidence to support the claim that Long intended to gain the assistance of Coughlin and Townsend in the 1936

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[82] The New York Times, April 9, 1935, p. 11.

campaign. Thomas L. Stokes, a competent reporter in the New Deal era, said that from the "best sources" he learned that this was true.[83] General Hugh S. Johnson claimed Long and Coughlin were in open alliance,[84] and a contemporary writer, John F. Carter, asserted that a secret talk was held between the two in which Coughlin promised to help Long.[85] None of the principles involved ever publicly stated that they intended to ally under the Share Our Wealth banner, but the fact that Long was the only one of the three to announce himself as a candidate in 1935 hints at this. Further, the fact that after Long's death the Share Our Wealth organization at least nominally joined Townsend and Coughlin in a third party movement, indicates that the groundwork for a coalition had been prepared earlier.[86]

The Republicans were elated over the prospect of a split in Democratic ranks, and Colonel Edward M. House reported to Roosevelt that the Republicans were promising support to Long if he should decide to run. Roosevelt, in answering House, revealed that he was aware of this situation:

> All of these Republican elements [conservative, liberal, and progressive] are flirting with Huey Long and probably financing him. A third Progressive Republican ticket and a fourth "Share the Wealth" ticket they believe would crush

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[83] Thomas L. Stokes, Chip Off My Shoulder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 402.

[84] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 3, p. 2943.

[85] Unofficial Observer [John F. Carter], American Messiahs (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935), p. 43.

[86] Infra, p. 118.

> us and that then a free for all would result in which case anything might happen.
>
> There is no question that it all is a dangerous situation . . . .[87]

Farley, in agreement with F. D. R., indicated in particular that Liberty League financial support was in the offing for Long.[88]

In any case, there was no doubt that Democratic leaders took the Long Presidential threat seriously. Farley had a secret public opinion poll taken to measure Long's strength on a third party ticket. The poll revealed that as a Presidential candidate he would have received from three to four million votes. Furthermore, his potential votes were not limited to Louisiana and nearby southern states. Long had as much following in the North as in the South and in industrial centers as well as in rural areas. In New York State he would have polled 100,000 votes, with most of the votes taken from the Democratic Party. Farley concluded that Long might have held the balance of power in important key states, such as New York.[89]

Long's popularity in 1935 was due to a deliberate effort on his part to spread the Share Our Wealth message. A partial recital of his activities indicates this. In February he addressed the Georgia House of Representatives,[90] and his aide, Gerald L. K. Smith, was invited to

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[87]Roosevelt, pp. 452-3.

[88]Farley, Behind the Ballots . . ., p. 250.

[89]Ibid., p. 249.

[90]The New York Times, February 6, 1935, p. 3.

speak to the Minnesota legislature.[91] The New York Times reported that the Share Our Wealth meetings held by Long in March were filled to overflowing.[92] A typical Share Our Wealth rally in Philadelphia, for example, drew an alleged crowd of 25,000.[93] Perhaps the most significant speech of the Spring campaign was his address in Des Moines to the Farm Holiday Association, headed by Milo Reno--a potential ally for Long in the 1936 election.[94] By August, reports were received from Florida that Long had offered $200,000 in financial assistance to an avowed candidate for Governor if he would run under the Share Our Wealth banner.[95] With Long's assassination in September, the proselytizing ended, but there was every reason to believe that his tempo of speech-making would only have increased as the 1936 election drew near.

Administration Counterattack

As was related above, Long began attacking the Administration early in the 1933 Congressional session. The Administration was in no mood to bestow favors on its critics, and within a few months it began fighting Long with the most powerful weapons it held: patronage, funds, and legal prosecution.

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[91] Ibid., February 5, 1935, p. 3.

[92] Ibid., March 27, 1935, p. 20.

[93] American Progress, April, 1935.

[94] The New York Times, April 28, 1935, p. 1.

[95] Ibid., August 11, 1935, IV, p. 6.

According to Farley, the patronage question was almost immediately thrust on the Administration. Long had opposed F. D. R.'s bank-opening bill and other measures in the Senate, but at the same time had the temerity to barrage the White House with telephone calls insisting that the men he recommended for appointments be selected. Roosevelt decided not to go along with Long's suggestions, and had an interview arranged with him. Long pressed the point that he had helped F. D. R. receive his nomination, and that as his reward should have control of Louisiana patronage. He even had the gall to keep his hat on during the conversation in order to test the mettle of the President. However, F. D. R. just smiled, promised nothing, and finally embarrassed Long enough to force him to remove his hat. After this interview the Senator never saw the President again, and from that moment on the Administration was to take the offensive.[96]

An examination of the minutes of the Executive Council, which was a larger body than the Cabinet, has revealed Roosevelt's determination to weaken Long by directing patronage to his Louisiana enemies.[97] The Democratic Party in Louisiana was traditionally made up of factions vying against one another for power, and it was to anti-Long factions, and in particular the old New Orleans Ring, that federal patronage was assigned.[98] Under the stimulus of this encouragement, the Ring began

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[96] Farley, Behind the Ballots . . . , pp. 239-41.

[97] Burns, p. 512.

[98] Beals, p. 412.

vigorous efforts to retain control of New Orleans and to capture the state government. Even New Deal clubs were organized.[99] However, the anti-Long faction was scarcely more honest than Long. Their corruption and the Senator's strong-arm tactics soon brought the Ring to its knees, and by the end of 1934 it could safely be said that he was the uncontested king of Louisiana.[100]

The story of the allocation of federal funds was similar. However, in this case Long did something about regaining control. The issue came to a head in 1935 when Long created a State Advisory Board of Contracts which allocated federal funds as he desired.[101] Under this condition Ickes refused to give Louisiana its share of the work-relief funds voted by Congress. Long was angered and said: "Ickes can go slap-damn to Hell," and he added, "There's one sovereign state left in America run by the people who don't give a damn about the combination between Stalin and the Nourmahal."[102] A few months later Long called a special session of the Louisiana legislature which authorized suit by the State against the federal government to test its rights to spend in Louisiana the work-relief funds through bureaus

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[99] Hodding Carter, "Kingfish to Crawfish," The New Republic, LXVII (January 24, 1934), p. 303.

[100] Sindler, p. 86.

[101] Beals, p. 324.

[102] Ibid., p. 328.

not belonging to the United States.[103] But a showdown between Long and the federal government was never to take place, because after his death the new administrators of the Long machine struck a bargain with the New Deal.[104]

Federal investigation of Long, with the intent of eventual prosecution, had begun under the Hoover Administration. However, the responsible Treasury agent, Elmer L. Irey, reported that Long had pressured the Hoover Administration to call off the investigation, and that he had been partially successful in that the Secretary of the Treasury, Ogden Mills, ordered suspension of the investigation in 1932 in lieu of the fact that Long could not be indicted before the Roosevelt Administration was to come into office. The new Administration let the matter lie dormant until January, 1934, when Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. ordered Irey to renew the investigation. The Democrats were now anxious to indict Long, and Irey had all possible assistance--even from the President, who personally solicited for Irey his choice for prosecuting attorney. The strategy was to begin with convictions against lesser officials in the Long machine and to gradually work up to the leader. In April 1935 the first conviction was won, but before the Senator could be indicted, he had been assassinated. Irey, however, was confident that he could have been convicted on a grand larceny charge in connection

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[103] The New York Times, September 11, 1935, p. 15.

[104] Infra, p. 48.

with his "Win or Lose" corporation. Eventually, after another period of inactivity, the federal government returned to take up the cudgels against the remaining members of the Long machine and convictions were attained.[105]

In the summer of 1935 the White House began to use another important weapon against Long which might be described as applying the backfire technique to politics. The Administration assigned the rabble-rouser Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi the task of preventing Long from increasing Share Our Wealth societies in that state. In August 1935 Bilbo reported his first victory over Long--the election of a pro-Administration candidate in a primary contest. He wired the President that the first treatment had been administered to "that madman Huey Long" and that more would follow. Roosevelt, in appreciation, answered: "I am watching your smoke."[106]

There was no doubt that the tactic of silent warfare used by the Administration hurt Long. For example, the American Progress complained that financial contributors had been harassed by agents of the federal government. The newspaper also asserted that Farley had been watching carefully its activities, hoping to find an excuse for revoking its second-class mailing permit.[107] In Washington, meanwhile, the Administration policy was containment. Rexford G. Tugwell wrote that in

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[105] Elmer L. Irey, The Tax Dodgers: The Inside Story of the T-Men's War with America's Political and Underworld Hoodlums (New York: Greenberg, 1948), pp. 91-110.

[106] Burns, p. 214.

[107] American Progress, January 4, 1935.

1935 he, and everyone else in the Administration in positions of responsibility, were instructed to shut Long out of all participation.[108] The Senator commented in response to this policy:

> In days past and gone I used to communicate with those gentlemen by direct route. When I sent them any money they telephoned me direct. I am satisfied that if they intended to communicate with me they would use those customary processes today.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It is time that he [F. D. R.] looked . . . to the ambassadors of that State sent here, and who will be sent here again.[109]

However, two members of the Administration were not able to hold back and avoid the temptation of giving verbal battle to Long. General Hugh S. Johnson, former N. I. R. A. director and himself a volatile personality, was provoked in 1935 by Long's attack on Farley to assail him and comrade-in-arms Father Coughlin. Making clear that he was giving his speech entirely on his own initiative he lashed out at the two "pied pipers" saying: "You can laugh at Father Coughlin, you can snort at Huey Long, but this country was never under a greater menace . . . ."[110] He took Long's Share Our Wealth ideas to task, saying that in order to give every family $5,000 a year income, the total income of the United States would have to be $150,000,000,000; and if some were to have $1,000,000 and so on down to $5,000 in the usual grades, as Long proposed, the national income would have to be

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[108] Rexford G. Tugwell, The Democratic Roosevelt: a Biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1957), p. 350.

[109] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, pp. 151,54.

[110] Ibid., Part 3, p. 2942.

$500,000,000,000, which was more than twelve times as much as it was in 1935 and more than six times as much as it ever had been.[111] Later, as a follow-up to his speech, Johnson urged a national campaign to exterminate the political influence of Long and Coughlin, dubbing them a "pair of political termites."[112]

Secretary Ickes was also piqued by Long's sallies against the Administration in 1935. In the middle of April of that year, on hearing that the Senator was going to Des Moines to speak to the Farm Holiday Association, Ickes thought a third party formation was in the offing and publicly attacked him.[113] Long volleyed back and the personal dispute continued for several days. In his Diary, Ickes proudly stated that he hadn't had the worst of the passage at arms and took particular delight in his accusation that long's trouble was "halitosis of the intellect."[114] The climax came when Ickes issued a fusilade at Long, Coughlin, and Townsend at the annual luncheon of the Associated Press. While he upheld the right of free speech for his adversaries, he also made it clear that for his part he was not going to remain silent like most of the rest of the Administration when he was being subjected to their abuse.[115]

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[111] Ibid., pp. 2941-43.

[112] Davis, p. 267.

[113] The New York Times, April 17, 1935, p. 1.

[114] Ickes, p. 346.

[115] The New York Times, April 23, 1935, p. 1.

$500,000,000,000, which was more than twelve times as much as it was in 1935 and more than six times as much as it ever had been.[111] Jones, in a follow-up to his speech, then go on to argue a national campaign to exterminate the political influence of Long and Coughlin, dubbing them a "pair of political terrapins."[112]

Secretary Ickes was also piqued by Long's jeering against the Administration in 1935. In the middle of April of that year, he learned that the senator was going to Des Moines to speak to the Farm Holiday Association. Ickes thought a third party formation was in the offing and publicly attacked him.[113] Long volleyed back and the personal dispute continued for several days. In his diary, Ickes proudly stated that he hadn't had the worst of the passage at arms and took particular delight in his accusation that Long's brouhaha was "realistic of the insane."[114] The climax came when Ickes issued a tirade at Long, Coughlin, and Townsend as the annual Brookings of the Irreconciled Irons. While he upheld the right of free speech for his adversaries, he also made it clear that for his part he was not going to permit silent like most of the rest of the Administration seem to be doing subjected to their abuse.[115]

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[111] Ibid., pp. 294-95.

[112] Davis, p. 207.

[113] The New York Times, April 17, 1935, p. 1.

[114] Ickes, p. 366.

[115] The New York Times, April 23, 1935, p. 1.

Death and Defeat

On September 8, 1935, Long was fatally wounded by a young doctor wishing to satisfy a family grudge. Believing he saw his opportunity, Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith used his funeral oration in memory of Huey Long to establish himself as the leader of the Louisiana and national Share Our Wealth Societies. Following this he gave radio broadcasts demanding vengeance on the Kingfish's enemies, and he telegraphed F. D. R. demanding to know why Long's plotters had remained on federal payrolls.[116] But Smith was not in a position of power in Louisiana politics. Those who were--Robert S. Maestri, Richard W. Leche, Seymour Weiss, and others--decided to consolidate their power by coming to terms with F. D. R. and the New Deal rather than to carry out Long's national ambitions.[117] The terms of peace between Louisiana and the New Deal provided: in return for Louisiana's twenty votes at the Democratic National Convention, the Administration would permit the defacto ruling group in Louisiana to have a say in the distribution of (1) federal patronage and (2) relief funds.[118] In May 1936, F. D. R. visited Louisiana and lunched with Leche, Maestri and Weiss,[119] and in June, Seymour Weiss, head of the Louisiana convention delegation, announced that Louisiana was going down the line for

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[116] Ibid., September 22, 1935, IV, p. 1.

[117] Sindler, p. 118.

[118] The New York Times, February 5, 1936, p. 2.

[119] Ibid., May 9, 1937, IV, p. 11.

Roosevelt and the New Deal.[120] At about the same time Westbrook Pegler began talking about the "Second Louisiana Purchase" involved in the dropping of the indictments against Weiss and other former long henchmen.[121]

After his defeat in Louisiana, Gerald L. K. Smith attempted to carry on the Share Our Wealth Society as a national organization. But the ruling oligarchy in Louisiana neutralized his power there also. In February, 1936, Huey Long's wife was named head of the Share Our Wealth Society and was given the copyright to the organization and all membership lists.[122] Smith was told that any incursions on his part would be resented.[123] The American Progress continued to publish until October 1936, but Smith and national Share Our Wealth activities were never mentioned in the months after November 1935. Smith tried to carry on the myth that the Share Our Wealth Society continued to exist and that he was the head of it. On that basis he joined up with the Union Party in 1936, but even the Union Party repudiated him before the November election.[124]

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[120] Ibid., June 24, 1936, p. 19.

[121] Stokes, p. 404.

[122] The New York Times, May 9, 1937, IV, p. 11.

[123] Ibid., February 8, 1936, p. 2.

[124] Infra, p. 130.

With the death of Huey Long, the most important agitator was removed from the political scene--on the right or left. The Administration was indeed conscious of the fact that it needed to deal with both extremes of critics. Presidential adviser Rexford G. Tugwell stated that F. D. R. believed that not far below the surface of our disrupted society there were a good many strong men with the feeling that democracy had run its course and that the totalitarians had grasped the necessities of the time. But of the two appeals, right and left, the President felt that the left was the clearer present danger, and of the three principal agitators on the left he felt Long was the most to be feared.[125] The President told Tugwell:

> It's all very well for us to laugh over Huey. But actually we have to remember all the time that he really is one of two most dangerous men in the country. the other being Douglas MacArthur. [126]

Farley agreed with the President that Long presented a far greater threat to the Administration than Townsend and Coughlin. He refused, however, to go so far as to agree with the political strategists who believed that Long's Share Our Wealth ticket would leave the Republican Party in a poor third place after the 1936 election.[127] But he did state that if Long had lived and if the

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[125] Tugwell, pp. 349, 50.

[126] Ibid., p. 349.

[127] Farley, Behind the Ballots . . . , pp. 249-50.

Senate had refused to seat him after the 1936 election, this might " . . . have been food and drink for the dictator's ambitions . . . and made him so formidable that F. D. R. would have passed up his try for the third term . . . ."[128]

Townsend and Coughlin were never to have power even approaching that conceded to be in Long's hands by Farley. Probably this was due to the fact that they never held political office. But because they were lesser powers does not mean that they were insignificant agitators. On the contrary their actions, added to those of Long's, definitely helped the left to be the influence it was on the New Deal. With Long's assassination they were in the position to fill the vacancy left by the Louisiana dictator.

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[128] Farley, Jim Farley's Story . . . , p. 50.

CHAPTER II

DR. TOWNSEND AND OLD AGE PENSIONS

The Founding of the Townsend Plan

Francis E. Townsend was born in Livingston County in north central Illinois on January 13, 1866. His family later moved to Franklin, Nebraska, where young Francis spent most of his adolescent years. After trying his hand at selling, farming, and school teaching, Francis, then a young man thirty-one years old, enrolled in medical school in Omaha, Nebraska. After graduation he began his first medical practice in Belle Fourche, South Dakota--a small town in the midst of the Black Hills. Dr. Townsend served this community until World War I, when he entered the army as a doctor. After the war, he contracted peritonitis and was forced to migrate to California for his health. He was then in his middle fifties. His life up until then had been spent almost entirely in rural farming communities. Furthermore, he had certainly not yet been graced with success. The only bright spot in his medical career had been his few months in the service, and the contraction of peritonitis immediately upon his release dimmed his hopes for the future. Only his strong Protestant faith remained, when the sick doctor came to Long Beach, California, to look for a new home and recovery.[1]

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[1]Townsend, pp. 1-125, passim.

CHAPTER IX

DR. JOHNSON AND SOME AUTHORS

The Writing of the Tourney Man

Jonathan E. Tourney was born in Lincoln County in the second Illinois in January 1, 1866. His family later moved to Franklin, Kansas, where young Jonathan spent most of his adolescent years. After varying in his schooling, farming, and school teaching, Tourney, then a young man thirty-one years old, enrolled in medical school in Omaha, Nebraska. After graduation he began his first medical practice in Belle Plaine, South Dakota--a small town in the midst of the Black Hills. Dr. Tourney survived this community until World War I, when he entered the army as a doctor. After the war, he contracted pulmonitis and was forced to migrate to California for his health. By the time I, his eldest child, had grown up much that had been spent almost entirely in rural farming communities. Furthermore, he had certainly not yet been graced with success. The only bright spot in his medical career had been his service in the service, and the continuation of practicing temporarily upon his return dispel his hopes for the future. Only his strong Presbyterian faith remained, when his sons doctor came to Long Beach, California to look for a new home and recovery.[1]

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[1]Tourney, pp. 1-135, passim.

Dr. Townsend's health slowly improved, but beginning a new medical practice in an urban community in competition with younger and well-established doctors proved to be difficult. Commenting on those trying years, Dr. Townsend said:

> With my medical shingle hanging over my door, I used to sit for hours at a time, waiting for patients and feeling that I could not stand to look at those walls another minute. Every few months it would get so bad I would have to close up my office and rest until I got back on my feet.[2]

Finally, in 1930 he was appointed to the Long Beach Health Department to care for welfare patients. But in October 1933, due to a change in administration, Dr. Townsend lost his appointment.[3] He tried to sell real estate, but the depression had made new business ventures unprofitable.[4] In the fall of 1934, unemployed, he began to mull over the tragedy of the depression and the suggestions for economic betterment which were circulating at that time. Major C. H. Douglas in Great Britain had advocated a few years previously a "social credit" plan which would distribute an undetermined sum to "every citizen as a birthright." The distribution of income in this manner was supposed to overcome the slow velocity of money in recessions.[5]

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[2] Ibid., p. 130.

[3] U. S., Congress, House Select Committee Investigating Old Age Pension Organizations, Hearings, Old-Age Pension Plans and Organizations, 2 Vols., 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1936, Vol. I, p. 16. (Cited hereafter as House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936.)

[4] Townsend, p. 136.

[5] Richard L. Newberger and Kelley Loe, An Army of the Aged: a History and Analysis of the Townsend Old Age Pension Plan (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1936), p. 187.

Townsend was perhaps not acquainted with Major C. H. Douglas' scheme, but he was probably very familiar with a similar plan copyrighted in August 1931 by C. Steward MCord. MCord's plan provided for monthly annuities for retired aged and the compulsory spending thereof by the recipients. The Townsend Plan, as it was originally stated, followed almost idea for idea and word for word the MCord plan.[6]

In September 1933 Townsend began writing in the "vox pop" columns of the Long Beach Press Telegram on the economic value of pensions for the aged.[7] To his amazement his letters stimulated considerable interest among elderly people in Long Beach. Deciding to capitalize on this interest, Townsend asked a salesman acquaintance of his, Robert Earl Clements, to help him form an organization whose purpose would be to campaign for pensions for the aged. Since he was unemployed, Clements was willing to serve as a director for an organization which someday might provide him with a comfortable living.

Neither Clements nor Townsend were trained in economics and therefore did not concern themselves with the economic validity of the ideas they were to espouse.[8] Rather, they concerned themselves almost

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[6]Abraham Holtzman, "The Townsend Movement: a Study in Old Age Pressure Politics" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University), pp. 72, 75.

[7]Townsend, pp. 129, 137-38.

[8]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, pp. 13-15.

solely with promoting the public appeal of their ideas. Without much difficulty they agreed that the major feature of the Townsend Plan should be a $200 a month pension to be paid to every person over sixty. Income for this pension, they decided, should be raised by assessing a two per cent transaction tax not only on retail sales, but on every sale.[9]

Having decided that using the pressure of public opinion was the best way to get the Plan enacted into law, Townsend and Clements immediately set out to organize a powerful public following. In January 1934, under California Laws permitting the incorporation of non-profit organizations, Clements and Townsend legally established the "Old Age Revolving Pensions" organization.[10] Clements, whose organizational ideas dominated the first two years of the O. A. R. P., realized that advertising alone was not enough to assure a rapidly increasing O. A. R. P. membership.[11] He therefore instituted a commission system whereby organizers would receive a percentage of all

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[9]Infra, p. 62.

[10]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 125.

[11]A reading of the House Select Committee Hearings (1936) in their entirety revealed that Townsend was ignorant of many of the organizational aspects of the O. A. R. P., while Clements in contrast was well-informed and gave every indication of personally managing the organization.

membership fees.[12] At the same time the promoters began publishing a series of pamphlets explaining the Townsend Plan, which they sold for a nominal fee.[13] Before the year was out they had also begun publishing a newspaper which was to be best known under the name Townsend National Weekly.

The promotional efforts of Clements were amazingly successful. Townsend Plan supporters began to mushroom all over California. By the summer of 1934 the Townsendites had elected one of their number, John S. McGroarty, to Congress,[14] and the Republican candidate for Governor in California, Frank Merriam, had been persuaded to endorse the Townsend Plan.[15] Within another six months Governor Merriam kept his campaign promise and asked the California Legislature to memorialize Congress to consider the Townsend Plan.[16] Meanwhile, the Townsend movement had spread to other states, and on February 1, 1935, the national office of the O. A. R. P. opened in Washington, D. C.[17]

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[12]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 43.

[13]The most important pamphlet in 1934 was: Old Age Revolving Pensions; a Proposed National Plan. (Long Beach, California: Old Age Revolving Pensions, Inc., 1934).

[14]Townsend, p. 165.

[15]Carey McWilliams, Southern California Country; an Island on the Land (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946), p. 300.

[16]Official Townsend Weekly, January 28, 1935.

[17]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 17.

Further, the March 25, 1935 issue of the Townsend Weekly claimed a nationwide circulation of 125,000, with a reported growth rate of 10,000 a week.[18]

This rapid growth necessitated a form of organization which was flexible enough to absorb new memberships and yet firm enough to prevent grass roots notions from challenging the original plans of the two founders. Fortunately for the O. A. R. P., Clements instituted a hierarchical organisation which at first satisfied both requirements. At the top of the pyramid was the national office and below it were regional and state offices and finally the local clubs which were assigned to congressional districts. Orders came down from the Washington office and they were not supposed to be questioned. Further, all dues were sent directly to the national office, which took upon itself to dispense the commissions to the organizers. However, the organizers were paid by the state area managers through the regional officers. Each higher member of the chain of command had financial control over his lower counterpart. It was in the financial interest of each level of command to encourage membership solicitation, for all members of the hierarchy in one way or another received a percentage of membership fees and other funds solicited from the local clubs. By emphasizing monetary incentive, Clements

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[18] Official Townsend Weekly, March 25, 1935.

created an organization which had a firm practical foundation.[19]

The first milestone of the Townsend Plan was reached in February 1935 when, under the pressure of public opinion, the House Ways and Means Committee invited the Townsend leaders to present their proposals to Congress. Thus, in a little over a year from the date of incorporation the O. A. R. P. received its first formal national recognition. But the Townsend Plan was not well-received by the Committee. In particular the testimony of Dr. Townsend revealed the lack of thought which had gone into his plan. For example, when the Committee members challenged the principles of the Plan, Dr. Townsend answered:

> I have said to the people of America that it is time we tried a new experiment; an experiment which has not had the blessing of the so called "economists" and is therefore dubbed "fantastic" by them. I say to you gentlemen that every time an economist says this proposal is "luncy" the people react by sending additional thousands of letters to their representatives in Congress . . . .[20]

The one bright spot in the testimony of the Townsend leaders occurred when Dr. Robert R. Doane, an established economist, gave cautious endorsement to the Townsend Plan. He said there was no doubt that if through the collection of the transaction tax the economy could

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[19]House Select Committee Investigation Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, pp. 31-54.

[20]U. S., Congress, House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings, Economic Security Act, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935, p. 678. (Cited hereafter as House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings . . . , 1935.)

stimulate additional purchasing ability, the net effect would be favorable.[21] He continued:

> I think that it is possible with our present productive ability and capacity in the United States due to what you are all familiar with, the technological changes and increased efficiency in machine technique, that we might be able to develop within a period of years to a point where we could take care of these people to the full extent suggested originally by Dr. Townsend, and that it could be introduced now and gradually built up over a long number of months, 12, 24, 32, 50, 60 months, until you could reach that maximum.[22]

With Congressional recognition, the O. A. R. P. became a threat to the Administration, for the White House was anxious to have its proposed Social Security Bill (including old-age provisions) passed and the Townsend Plan proposals were diverting Congress from the White House measure. Consequently, when Administration officials were called to testify before the Ways and Means Committee on behalf of the Social Security Bill, they made it a point to explain at some length their rejection of the Townsend Plan. Secretary of Labor Frances E. Perkins in answer to a question on whether the Administration had investigated the possibility of adopting the Townsend Plan, said:

> Well, a real consideration was given to it, because it became a popular newspaper subject of discussion this summer, so that it was looked into sufficiently to make an estimate of what it would cost. Two hundred dollars a month to every

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[21] Ibid., p. 1124.

[22] Ibid., p. 1122.

> person now over 60 years of age would amount to something considerably more than one half of the total national income of the U. S. A., and it seems almost fantastic to estimate a solid, substantial insurance scheme in any such terms as that.[23]

Harry L. Hopkins, Federal Relief Administrator, indicated in his testimony some bitterness about the challenge the Townsend adherents were making to the Administration bill:

> . . . the proponents of this scheme, the Townsend Plan--and I do not laugh it off in terms of the popular support which it has, because it has a lot--are trying to put some of the rest of us in the position that we do not believe in old-age pensions. Some of us have been fighting for old-age pensions long before this thing was ever heard of.[24]

Likewise Dr. E. E. Witte, the Executive Director of the Committee on Economic Security created by the President in 1934, criticized strongly the Townsend Plan.[25]

The Ways and Means Committee, under the advice of the Administration, firmly rejected the Townsend Plan and recommended the Social Security Bill--hoping its passage would weaken the appeal of the Townsend Plan. However, before the Social Security Bill was adopted, the Townsendites succeeded in bringing to a vote in the House their proposal to substitute the Townsend Plan for the old-age provisions in the Social Security Act. The Administration, to prevent this from happening, had considered imposing the gag rule on the Social Security

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[23] Ibid., p. 20.

[24] Ibid., p. 217.

[25] Ibid., p. 110.

> person are over 65 years of age [illegible] considerably more [illegible] of the [illegible] of them [illegible] and [illegible] a [illegible] that.[23]

Harry L. Hopkins, [illegible] in his testimony [illegible] were making to the Administration bill:

> . . . the proposition of this kind [illegible] and I do not [illegible] which is [illegible] some of the rest of us [illegible] believe in old-age pensions. [illegible] for old-age pensions [illegible] of.[24]

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[23] Ibid., p. [illegible].

[24] Ibid., p. 217.

[25] Ibid., p. 110.

Bill in order to force it through the House without a Townsend amendment. However, the Administration contact man in Congress, Charles H. West, persuaded the White House not to impose the gag rule, for he believed that the restriction might back-fire and strengthen the Townsendites.[26] Therefore in April the Townsend Plan amendment was permitted to come to a vote, at which time it received fifty-nine ayes.[27] However, the vote did not accurately represent the extent of the Townsend strength, for fear on the Congressmen's part of Townsendite criticism had led to the substitution of a voice vote instead of a roll call. A roll call vote probably would have revealed additional Townsend support.[28] What worried the Congressmen most was a hint in the April 1 issue of the Townsend Weekly that Townsend candidates would be entered in the next national election.[29] In addition, Congressmen were beginning to receive the inundation of Townsend mail which was to become a most important Townsend weapon. The technique of barraging the Congressmen with letters was carefully organized. For example, in almost any Townsend Weekly in 1935 and 1936 a list of Congressmen was provided for the reader, combined with a strong reminder that he should write his Congressman regularly in regard to the adoption of the Townsend Plan.

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[26]Herring, p. 990.

[27]Townsend, p. 186.

[28]Newberger, p. 106.

[29]Official Townsend Weekly, April 1, 1935.

[illegible] p. 99.

[illegible], p. 100.

[illegible], p. 100.

[illegible] p. [illegible].

Analysis of the Plan

The Townsend Plan was introduced in Congress by Representative John S. McGroarty in the form of two bills: H. R. 3977 and H. R. 7154. Hearings were never held on the bills themselves, though H. R. 3977 was the basis for the testimony of Townsend leaders before the Ways and Means Committee in February 1935.[30] In elaborating on his Plan at that time Dr. Townsend said that the estimated population of persons over sixty was 7,500,000.[31] To these would be given $200 a month which they would be obligated to spend within thirty days. Thus the increase in purchasing power each month would be $1,500,000,000. On a yearly basis, by taking into consideration the rapid turnover of the dollar in trade, a sum total of $612,000,000,000 would be created the first year.

To provide $1,500,000,000 per month in pensions Townsend proposed a transaction tax of two per cent on all sales. He conceived that this tax would yield at least that amount, believing that total "transactions" in 1929 amounted to $1,200,000,000,000. He conceded that in 1935 the amount of "transactions" had decreased, but he believed the added new business of $612,000,000,000 in the first year

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[30] House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. II, p. 1069.

[31] The reference for all of Dr. Townsend's elaboration is House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings . . . , 1935, pp. 758-60.

would add sufficient taxable income.

Perhaps most important of all, Dr. Townsend said his plan was designed to bring immediate relief for (1) the figure of 10,000,000 unemployed in 1935 would drop instantly to 7,000,000 when the 3,000,000 persons currently employed over sixty were put on pension, (2) the distribution of $200 per month to 7,500,000 persons would create such a demand for goods through the velocity principle that the rest of the unemployed would be quickly rehired, (3) the $200 per month pension would save the government money by eliminating the current need to spend money on doles, pensions, institutions, and support of commodity prices, and (4) because the government would undoubtedly receive more income than it had costs, the national debt would be decreased--thus eliminating this cancerous growth from our political institutions.

There have been several analyses of the Townsend Plan. The best one, however, was a University of Chicago Round Table publication: The Economic Meaning of the Townsend Plan.[32] Using this publication, unless otherwise stated, some of the major economic weaknesses will be discussed below.

The University of Chicago pamphlet began with an analysis of Dr. Townsend's total "transaction" figure of $1,200,000,000,000 for the

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[32] Harry D. Gideonse (ed.), The Economic Meaning of the Townsend Plan, Public Pamphlet No. 20 of The University of Chicago Round Table series (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936), pp. 10-21.

year 1929. Dr. Townsend had borrowed this figure from statistical information giving the "debits to individual accounts," i.e.,--total face value of checks drawn upon the bank accounts of individuals and business firms. Using the 1935 debit figure the Townsend Plan would provide 8,000,000 annuitants $100 per month. But debits figures were known to be much larger than taxable transactions, for many transactions (such as the purchase of real estate through brokers and many types of security dealings) involved separate payments from the buyer to the broker and from the broker to the seller, so that they were counted more than once in the debits. Further, under the provisions of the second McGroarty Bill, H. R. 7154, many items were excluded from the transactions tax. A correct figure for the value of goods and services changing hands in 1929 would be $300,000,000,000 to $350,000,000,000 and not $1,200,000,000,000. Using a corrected figure for the value of goods and services in 1934 meant that under the Townsend Plan 7,000,000 people could receive about $35 per month.

Dr. Townsend emphasized the revolving feature, believing the money circulating from the pensioner, to the retailer, etc., to the government, and then back again to the pensioner would so stimulate business that the increased national income could easily absorb the high transaction tax. The University of Chicago publication stated, however, that the velocity argument was defeated because the money put into circulation would only be drawn out again four months later under the provisions of the second McGroarty Bill. Further the Treasury would be forced to keep three months' collections on hand under the

provisions of this bill and, in practice, firms paying the tax would be obligated to set aside reserves of cash for the purpose of the tax. Clearly, said the University of Chicago publication, the economy would be slowed down, not speeded up, by the Townsend Plan.

According to Edwin E. Witte, Executive Director of the Committee on Economic Security, the burden of the transaction tax would slow down the economy so much it would probably paralyze it. The two per cent transaction tax was to be assessed on all transactions and thus would add unwarranted costs in the manufacture and distribution of goods. In glassware, for instance, there were eleven taxable transactions between the producer of the raw materials and the consumer. Each of these transactions was to be taxed. In addition, since the people over sixty were to receive close to half of the national income (based on an income of $46,000,000,000 for 1933) the burden would be very heavy on those under sixty unless the pensions turned over close to fifty times in any given month. This would be impossible. The alternative would be to borrow the necessary funds in order to maintain a full $200 per month pension. Borrowing on the necessary scale would lead to pronounced inflation. Thus, duplicate taxation and inflation would cause prices to rise and soon the pensioners would be no better off than they were before, and those under sixty would be immeasurably worse off.[33] Townsend was later to support a plan of borrowing funds

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[33]House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings . . . , 1935, p. 895.

to initiate his $200 per month pension.[34]

In contrast to the $200 per month Townsend pension, the Administration's Social Security Act provided for only a token pension. As originally passed, the major provisions of the old-age portion of the bill provided for those over sixty-five a modest pension (fifteen to eighty-five dollars a month) which varied in amount with the pre-retirement income of the recipient.[35] In addition, the number of people expected to be placed on a social security pension was relatively few. Harry Hopkins estimated that less than 600,000 persons would receive pensions the first year.[36]

The Climax

The passage of the Social Security Bill in the spring of 1935 had not greatly weakened the argument for the Townsend Plan, for Huey Long's filibuster of a supplementary appropriation bill had delayed the effectual operation of the Social Security Act until 1936.[37] Consequently, the Townsend movement continued to grow rapidly throughout 1935. The total income of the O. A. R. P. until December 31, 1935, was $771,964.09, of which about $600,000.00 was collected in 1935.[38] In the spring of 1936 there were approximately

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[34]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 785.

[35]U. S., Statutes at Large, XLIX, Part 1, p. 622.

[36]House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings . . . , 1935, p. 215.

[37]Supra, p. 20.

[38]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 82.

to initiate his $200 per month pension.[34]

In contrast to the $200 per month Townsend pension, the Administration's Social Security Act provided for only a meager pension. As originally passed, the major provisions of the old-age portion of the bill provided for those over sixty-five a meager pension (limited to eighty-five dollars a month) which varied in amount with the previous income of the recipient.[35] In addition, the number of people expected to be placed on a social security pension was relatively few. Harry Hopkins estimated that less than 60% of persons would receive pensions the first year.[36]

The Claims

The passage of the Social Security Bill in the spring of 1935 had not greatly lessened the arguments for the Townsend Plan. Dr. Long Long's filibuster of a supplementary economy legislation bill had delayed the effected operation of the Social Security Act until 1936.[37] Consequently, the Townsend movement continued to grow rapidly throughout 1935. The total income of the O. A. U. F. early December 31, 1935, was $771,[illegible].[illegible], of which about $[illegible],000.00 was collected in 1935.[38] In the spring of 1936 there were approximately

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[34]House Ways and Means Committee, Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 183.

[35]O. A., Pensions in Larger, XLII, Part 4, p. [illegible].

[36]House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings . . . , 1936, p. 112.

[37]Supra, p. [illegible].

[38]House Ways and Means Committee, Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 82.

7,000 Townsend Clubs with a total membership of 1,000,000 to 2,000,000.[39] However, the Townsend strength was primarily rural and not urban, as a study of Townsend newspaper support has revealed.[40] There were exceptions of course. Los Angeles was a major center of Townsendism, if for no other reason than that Dr. Townsend lived in Long Beach and began the movement there. Yet Los Angeles, being an area of heavy recent migration from the Middle West, was practically a suburb of Iowa.[41] Even in this metropolitan community there was a rural heritage which made it susceptible to unorthodox economic ideas.

The hierarchical organizational structure established by Clements was maintained throughout 1935. However, Clements was finding it difficult to maintain discipline in the lower ranks. In some districts the officers used the Townsend Clubs to support local political tickets. This was in strict violation of the orders sent out by the national office.[42] Other leaders in the lower echelons became disillusioned after working in the O. A. R. P. for a few months. They complained that the movement was too much interested in raising money and not enough interested in applying political pressure to get

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[39] Ibid., p. 208.

[40] House Committee on Ways and Means, Hearings, . . . , 1935, pp. 577, 83.

[41] Newberger, pp. 12-13.

[42] House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 200.

the Townsend Plan adopted by Congress.[43] Finally, in July 1935 a convention of Townsend revolters organized the National Annuity League which broke with the Townsend-Clements leadership but retained the goal of working for the adoption of the Townsend Plan.[44]

In response to this dissension Clements and Townsend called for a national convention in October to bolster the morale of the organization and to get support for an even more centralized control of the local clubs. With the near unanimous support of the delegates, Townsend and Clements won for the national office the right to determine for the entire Townsend organization the political policy in the coming campaign, including the endorsement of all candidates. Furthermore, the convention passed a resolution opposing regional political activity on the part of the Townsend Clubs. In addition, the convention limited the size of new clubs to 1,000 members in order to prevent the consolidation of power on the local level, and dues were raised to ten cents a month to give the national organization a firmer financial base.[45]

Communication between the central office and the local clubs was maintained through a distribution of literature from the Washington

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[43] Ibid., pp. 455-59.

[44] Richard L. Neuberger and Kelley Loe, "The Old People's Crusade," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CLXXII (March,1936), p. 432.

[45] National Townsend Weekly, November 4, 1935.

the Townsend Plan adopted by congress.[43] Finally, in July 1935 a convention of Townsend revolvers organized a national club by leagues which broke with the Townsend-Clubs, leadership but retained the goal of working for the adoption of the Townsend Plan.[44]

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Communication between the central office and the local clubs was maintained through a distribution of literature from the headquarters

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[43] Ibid., pp. 523-25.

[44] Richard L. Neuberger and Kelsey Cox, "The Old Republic Crusade," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CLXX (March 1935), p. 392.

[45] National Townsend Weekly, November 4, 1935.

office. However, the Townsend National Weekly remained the most important publication in this regard. It was sent to all clubs, and in it the latest policy moves were stated along with the orthodox Townsend Plan creed.[46] The Weekly, compared to Huey Long's American Progress, was dull reading in 1935--having more similarity to a Protestant denominational publication than to a typical extremist newspaper of this period. The radio was also extensively used by the O. A. R. P.--with its most thorough coverage on the West Coast and Middle West. Every week a listing of Townsend programs was carried in the Weekly. The most extensive radio coverage for the O. A. R. P. was provided during the Townsend National Convention when two networks broadcast the Sunday meeting of the Convention.[47]

There is no doubt that the O. A. R. P. was a true mass movement. It was not only well-organized and moderately well-disciplined, but it also had developed fully the psychological bonds which are a part of any major mass movement. The mechanics for creating these bonds were rituals and conventions. But the personality of Dr. Townsend was the all-important symbol of unity and emotional fervor in the movement. An elderly man, he was tall and gaunt--representing at once to his retired followers both a self-image and a contemporary Abraham Lincoln.

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[46]House Select Committee Investigation Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 208.

[47]National Townsend Weekly, October 28, 1935.

His framed picture was enshrined, like that of a patron saint, in many Southern California homes, and to many elderly people Dr. Townsend was indeed a Messiah who had been sent to deliver them from the trials of the depression.[48] He obviously enjoyed this adoration, for he commented self-consciously and rather awkwardly in his autobiography: "There is an ancient saying that it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks. I had become an old dog (spelled backwards) to a lot of people and I did not know how to play the role."[49] The O. A. R. P. followers had complete faith in him and his Plan. There was no doubt in their minds that the Plan would not only cure the depression, but all of society's ills as well, including wars.[50] In short they believed that Dr. Townsend was going to create for them a society in which, "Benevolence and kindly consideration for others will displace suspicion and avarice, and brotherly love and tolerance will blossom into full flower . . . ."[51]

In keeping with the Messianic tone of the movement there was a continuous attempt on the part of the O. A. R. P. to identify the Townsend movement with organized religion. In fact, many Protestant churches espoused the Townsend Plan.[52] Every Townsend Club meeting

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[48]McWilliams, p. 308.

[49]Townsend, p. 166.

[50]National Townsend Weekly, October 21, 1935.

[51]Old Age Revolving Pensions . . . , p. 5.

[52]Newberger, An Army of the Aged . . . , p. 77.

opened with a prayer[53] and not infrequently Townsendites asserted that their movement fulfilled prophecies of the Bible.[54] Furthermore, every O. A. R. P. member was expected to join in singing the Townsend hymns. Perhaps their favorite was:

That man Townsend
  That fine man Townsend
He must know sumpin'
  He sure done sumpin'
He keeps things rollin'
  He keeps things rollin' along.

He don't destroy taters
  He don't plow down de cotton
And dem dat does it
  Will be forgotten
While this man Townsend
  Will keep things rollin' along.[55]

The Townsendites were not the same class of people who made up the bulk of Huey Long's Share Our Wealth Society or even of Father Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice. The O. A. R. P. appealed to the same Americans who advocated for and successfully put over prohibition in the twenties.[56] For instance, in the 1936 Townsend National Convention smoking was forbidden at the sessions and the delegates carefully avoided the temptation of the bars of Cleveland.[57]

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[53]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 114.

[54]The New York Times, December 30, 1935, IV, p. 11.

[55]Ibid., July 19, 1936, IV, p. 1.

[56]Newberger, An Army of the Aged . . . , p. 77.

[57]The New York Times, July 19, 1936, IV, p. 1.

One writer described the delegates at another Townsend convention as being of the "best American stock," and their faces, she said, might well have served as models for Grant Wood portraits.[58]

An essential ingredient in the character of the movement was the extreme emphasis it placed on financial success per se. Both Clements and Townsend apparently believed that if the O. A. R. P. became a big business that that, in itself, would assure them of success. Every gimmick possible was employed to bring funds into the organization. For example, Townsendites were urged to buy Townsend license plates, windshield stickers, buttons, petitions, leaflets, speaker's manuals, tire covers, and many other items for sale from the national office. In addition, there were always special financial appeals like the "Emergency Fund Honor Roll" begun by the Weekly which printed the names of those who made a special contribution to the O. A. R. P.[59] As mentioned earlier, one of the major complaints of the dissidents in the movement was that Dr. Townsend was first of all concerned about the financial structure of the O. A. R. P., believing that political pressure should be applied only after financial strength had been won.[60]

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[58]Newberger, An Army of the Aged . . . , p. 204.

[59]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 77.

[60]Supra, pp. 67, 68.

One writer described the delegates of [illegible] [illegible] as being of the "best American stock," and [illegible] [illegible] said, might well have served as models for [illegible] [illegible].[58]

An essential ingredient in the [illegible] [illegible] was [illegible] and the extreme emphasis it placed on [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] and [illegible] apparently believed [illegible] [illegible] business that they, in [illegible], [illegible] become [illegible] [illegible]. Every gimmick possible was employed to [illegible] [illegible] the organization. For example, Townsendites were urged to buy [illegible] [illegible], windshield stickers, buttons, [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], tire covers, and many other items [illegible] [illegible]. In addition, there were always special financial [illegible] [illegible] the "Emergency Fund Honor Roll" [illegible] the *Weekly* which [illegible] the names of those who made a special contribution to the O. A. R. P.[59] [illegible] mentioned earlier, one of the major complaints of the [illegible] in the movement was that Dr. Townsend [illegible] [illegible] the financial structure of the O. A. R. P., [illegible] that [illegible] presents should be applied only [illegible] [illegible] strength and [illegible].[60]

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[58] Neuberger, *An Army of the Aged* . . . , p. [illegible].

[59] House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, *Hearings* . . . , 1936, [illegible].

[60] *Supra*, pp. [illegible], 68.

In fact, looking back over the failure of the O. A. R. P. to get the Townsend Plan enacted into law, Dr. Townsend said:

> Knowing the extreme poverty of those who were attracted to the pension movement we made the first mistake, of all the great number of mistakes we have made, of putting the annual dues for joining our society at only 25 cents.
> . . . . . .
> I feel certain today, that had our friends in the movement been willing to supply our headquarters with dues to the maximum of only 25 cents a month, we could long ago have "sold" the Plan to a vast majority of our citizens.[61]

The Townsend movement was also patriotic. Before every club meeting a pledge of allegiance to the flag was given and "America" was sung.[62] But like any mass movement its patriotism was solely designed to provide an authority for its policies. The patriotism of the Townsendites was designed to combine a sanction for the Plan with a strong anti-foreign and anti-intellectual prejudice. For example, it was standard O. A. R. P. policy to accuse F. D. R. of being controlled by "communistic college professors who will not let him endorse the Townsend Plan, the greatest humanitarian idea of the age."[63] On another occasion, when Upton Sinclair wired O. A. R. P. leaders about the possibility of merging Sinclair's EPIC plan with the Townsend Plan, Dr. Townsend commented: "We don't endorse any socialistic program. The EPIC plan opposes the profit system. The

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[61]Townsend, pp. 163-4.

[62]House Select Committee Investigation Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 114.

[63]Newberger, An Army of the Aged . . . , p. 25.

Townsend Plan represents an attempt to make the profit system function."[64] The O. A. R. P. prejudice against foreign ideas inevitably carried over into the adoption of an isolationist foreign policy. When the President asked for a modest military expenditure in 1935, due to the danger in the Far East, the Townsend Weekly commented that to attack Japan on her home grounds would be risky, and that Roosevelt should let Japan handle her own affairs in Asia. Roosevelt, the Weekly said, should spend his time working out a solution to the problems at home.[65]

A suspicion of "un-American" ideas in itself would place the Townsend movement in the Populist tradition. But an even closer tie to this heritage was apparent in the O. A. R. P. belief in the efficacy of monetary management. To Townsendites, the mission of money lay in its spending and therefore to not spend money was to sabotage the economy. But through government intervention, believed Townsend, the retired would be forced to spend and the problem of scarcity in abundance in the contemporary industrial world would be solved. However, by a process of illogical deduction, the Townsendites also believed that big business was the group which was most guilty of not spending, though this point was not excessively emphasized.[66] Thus, Dr. Townsend also fell in line with Long and Coughlin and their precursors in placing the blame for hard times on the "vested interests."

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[64]Townsend, p. 170.

[65]Official Townsend Weekly, April 1, 1935.

[66]National Townsend Weekly, December 30, 1935.

The O. A. R. P. had been successful in the past in getting elected to Congress a few members of the organization from the Far West. However, when Vernon W. Main, a Townsend endorsed Republican, won a by-election contest in Michigan in December 1935, the threat of a Townsend bloc being elected to Congress seemed imminent.[67] First of all, the major issue in the Michigan election was the Townsend Plan, and the Plan had thereby demonstrated its political appeal to the electorate. Secondly, this was the first Townsend political victory east of the Mississippi River, indicating the growing national threat of the O. A. R. P. Furthermore, reports from other states indicated equal Townsend strength. In Washington and Oregon entrenched Congressmen were having competition at home from Townsend quarters,[68] and in Massachusetts Townsend managers were claiming that even Governor Curley would not be able to win if he refused to back the Townsend Plan.[69]

Meanwhile, the national office of the O. A. R. P. was circularizing a letter to every House member asking him to state his position on the Townsend Plan.[70] In February the Townsend Weekly began publishing the stands taken by the Congressmen. As of that month ninety Representatives had answered, and forty-nine had pledged themselves to

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[67] The New York Times, December 19, 1935, p. 2.

[68] Ibid., November 24, 1935, II, p. 10.

[69] Ibid., December 30, 1935, IV, p. 11.

[70] Ibid., December 15, 1935, p. 1.

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[67] The New York Times, November 20, 1965, [illegible].

[68] Ibid., November 24, 1965, [illegible].

[69] Ibid., March 27, 1966, [illegible].

[70] Ibid., March 13, 1966, [illegible].

vote for the McCroarty bill.[71] The strategy of the Townsendites clearly copied that used successfully by the Anti-Saloon League. Their aim was to force regular party candidates to take a position on the Townsend Plan and then to bring about the defeat of the unpledged candidates. In fact, many former Anti-Saloon League officials were entering the Townsend organization.[72] It was no wonder that Congressmen opposed to the Plan the previous year were writing pledges of support, or that in several instances they made special trips to Washington to offer helpful cooperation. Even presidential aspirants telephoned the O. A. R. P. asking for literature.[73] Feeling that its objective was almost won, the Townsend Weekly proudly quoted from the Christian Century:

> . . . the Townsend Plan has suddenly begun to enroll followers by the million . . . . Two solid facts lie behind the Townsend proposals, either one sufficient in itself to insure that had this plan not been brought forward, something much like it would have been . . . the average span of life in the United States, which stood at about 25 years in 1800, now stands at 54 . . . . To that fact add the utterly inadequate nature of the old age pension system offered by the present Federal and State social security laws and it is easy to see why Dr. Townsend is enrolling followers at the present rate . . . it is as certain as anything in politics can be that the next three decades are going to witness an increasing drive to afford the aged not merely security but abundance.[74]

Investigation of the Movement

Believing that the O. A. R. P. would enter the 1936 election campaign, the House of Representatives undertook an investigation to

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[71] National Townsend Weekly, February 3, 1935.

[72] The New York Times, November, 1935, II, p. 10.

[73] Ibid., December 15, 1935, IV, p. 7.

[74] National Townsend Weekly, November 25, 1935.

vote for the Economy bill.[72] The strategy of the Townsendites clearly applied that most successfully by the Anti-Saloon League. Their aim was to force regular party candidates to take a position on the Townsend Plan and then to bring out the ballot of the unpledged candidates. In fact, many former Anti-Saloon League officials were entering the Townsend organization.[73] It was no wonder that Congressmen opposed to the Plan the previous year were writing pledges of support, or that in several instances they made special trips to Washington to offer helpful cooperation. Even presidential aspirants helped boost the O. A. U. F. making for literature.[74] Feeling that its objective was almost won, the Townsend weekly proudly quoted from the Charleston Gazette:

> . . . the Townsend Plan has suddenly begun to enroll followers by the million . . . . Two solid years the Gazette has followed proceedings, either one sentiment in itself to believe that had this plan not been brought forward, something much like it would have been . . . the average open of life in the United States, which stood at about 25 years in 1800, now stands at 75 . . . . To this fact and the strongly humanitarian motive of the old age pension system offered by the present federal and state social security laws and it is easy to see why the Townsend is enrolling followers at the present rate . . . It is as certain as anything in politics can be that the next three Congresses are going to witness an increasing drive to afford the aged not merely security but abundance.[75]

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[73] The New York Times, November, 1935, II, p. 10.

[74] Ibid., December 15, 1935, IV, p. 7.

[75] National Townsend Weekly, November 23, 1935.

discredit the Townsend organization. The House approached the task gingerly out of fear that instead of disarming the O. A. R. P. of its strength it might cause its followers to rally to its defense. For example, the House rejected a suggestion that it invoke against the O. A. R. P. the Corrupt Practices Act, which required the filing with the clerk of the House an accounting of receipts and expenditures for all organizations attempting to influence federal elections in two or more states.[75] It was finally decided to create the Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations to investigate old-age pension movements. The Townsend Plan was singled out, and in fact was the only old-age pension organization investigated.[76] The investigating committee was shrewdly made up of four Democrats and four Republicans, thus indicating the bi-partisan nature of the investigation.[77] For chairman of the Committee, the House chose C. Jasper Bell, whose district was controlled by the Pendergast Machine of Missouri and was therefore immune to Townsend political counterattack.

The stated aim of the investigation was to expose the "pension-plan racket," and from March 26, 1936, intermittently through July 7, 1936, hearings were held in various cities throughout the United States. The hearings created a great deal of publicity, but they revealed very

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[75]The New York Times, January 28, 1936, p. 1.

[76]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. II, p. 1159.

[77]The New York Times, February 13, 1936, p. 1.

little in the way of outright corruption. True, the O. A. R. P. had spent money liberally and Clements had earned $78,000 in a year and a half, but Dr. Townsend had made little more than a modest living from it. The most that could be said for the hearings was that they revealed incompetence combined with autocratic leadership on the part of Townsend and Clements.[78]

Not all the dramatics were left to the initiative of the Committee. When they asked for the petition lists collected by the O. A. R. P., the Townsend clubs organized an automobile caravan to carry the 10,000,000 claimed signatures from Los Angeles to Washington, with stops for rallies along the way.[79] But the high point in the melodrama occurred when Dr. Townsend walked out of the investigation. In a brief announcement to the Committee he said:

> In view of the apparent unfriendly attitude of this committee and the unfair attitude it has shown to me and the members of my organization, I deem it my duty to say that I shall no longer attend these committee meetings. I am retiring from this sort of inquisition and I do not propose to come back again except under arrest.[80]

After some deliberation Townsend was cited for contempt of the House by a vote of 271 to 41.[81] However, he was not to be prosecuted until after the fall elections.

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[78]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, pp. 585-614; Vol. II, p. 1159.

[79]Ibid., p. 584.

[80]Ibid., p. 769.

[81]Ibid., p. 771.

An American Institute of Public Opinion poll revealed that in March 1936, half of the American people favored the Townsend Plan.[82] But in spite of its apparent popularity, there was no doubt that the O. A. R. P. was severely shaken by the House investigation. The dues of the O. A. R. P. dropped almost one-half from the last quarter of 1935 to the first quarter of 1936.[83] The Townsend Weekly in March 1936 complained that a radio station in Cincinnati had refused to continue sending out Townsend broadcasts until after the Congressional committee had made its formal report on the O. A. R. P.[84] In the May primaries in California and Oregon the Townsend candidates did very poorly, and relieved Congressmen almost ignored the "Townsend Caravan" when it arrived in Washington, whereas a few months earlier probably sixty or seventy Congressmen would have made a point of personally greeting such a "Townsend Caravan."[85]

Aside from the loss in revenue, the other most immediate harm caused by the investigation was the breaking up of the O. A. R. P. The state manager for Massachusetts testified, that as of June 1935, Dr. Townsend was the only important original Townsend movement personage remaining with the organization. This was undoubtedly an

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[82]Hadley Cantril (ed.), Public Opinion 1935-1946 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 542.

[83]The New York Times, March 31, 1936, p. 1.

[84]National Townsend Weekly, March 16, 1936.

[85]The New York Times, March 24, 1936, IV, p. 10.

overstatement, but there was no doubt the attrition was severe. The most significant resignation was Clements'. He had been in dispute with Townsend over the management of the organization for some time, and probably the investigation was not the sole cause for his resignation. However, his leaving the movement certainly indicated to O. A. R. P. followers that all was not well with the Townsend organization. The other major figure to resign was Representative John S. McGroarty, whose name was associated with the proposed Townsend bills in Congress. As in the case of Clements, the investigation only brought to the surface the animosity and misunderstanding which had been brewing for some time beneath the surface between McGroarty and Townsend.[86]

Under the pressure of mounting criticism brought on by the investigating committee, Dr. Townsend had no choice but to bend with the wind and to try to reorganize his movement. He began by giving ostensible power to a Board of Directors (chosen by him) who in theory would be responsible to the rank and file Townsendites. However, in practice, Dr. Townsend had absolute control over the Board, for he had bought out Clements' share of the stock when Clements had resigned--thus giving him the majority of the votes in the O. A. R. P. corporation.[87]

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[86]House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, pp. 131, 201, 785-89, 827.

[87]The New York Times, April 5, 1935, IV, p. 12.

overestimated, but there was no doubt the exposition was over. The most significant resignation was Clemenceau's. He had been in struggle with Townsend over the management of the organization for some time, and probably the investigation was the main cause for his resignation. However, his leaving the movement particularly indicated to O. A. P. P. followers that all was not well with the Townsend organization. The other major figure to resign was Representative John R. McCormick, whose name was associated with the Townsend Technocrat bills in Congress. As in the case of Clemenceau, the investigation only brought to the surface the animosity and misunderstanding which had been growing for some time between the factions between McCormick and Townsend.[86]

Under the pressure of mounting criticism coupled to the investigating committee, Dr. Townsend had no choice but to bend with the wind and to try to reorganize his movement. He began by giving substantial power to a Board of Directors (chosen by him) who in theory would be responsible to the rank and file Townsendites. However, in practice, Dr. Townsend had absolute control over the Board, for he had bought out Clemenceau's share at the stock when Clemenceau had resigned--thus giving him the majority of the votes in the O. A. P. P. corporation.[87]

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[86]Texas Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, pp. 138, 202, 203-05, 267.

[87]The New York Times, April 5, 1936, IV, p. 12.

At the Townsend National Convention in July 1936 there was a grass roots attempt to truly democratize the organization. Club elected Townsend officials, called Citizens Maximi, forced through the Convention a resolution requiring the election of the Board of Directors by the Citizens Maximi. However, the resolution was never adhered to by Dr. Townsend, who continued to have the Board of Directors replace its own membership with his approval.[88]

But to meet another criticism, Dr. Townsend placed on salary organizers who formerly worked on a commission basis.[89] Clearly, he was determined to continue working for the enactment of his Plan. The House investigation had not weakened his convictions in the least as to the value of revolving pensions. Rather, the antagonism of the investigators only embittered him and made the hoped for passage of the Townsend Plan a chance for personal vindication.

The individual that Dr. Townsend held most responsible for the investigation was President Roosevelt. However, there was no evidence that the White House had inspired it. Rather the House was genuinely concerned for its own protection and took upon itself the investigation.[90] But Dr. Townsend undoubtedly felt that the President's opposition to the Townsend Plan, inspired by its competition to the Administration's Social Security Bill, had led the President to conspire with the House of

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[88] Ibid., July 15, 1936, p. 12.

[89] House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 627.

[90] Holtzman, p. 454.

Representatives. Further, his vanity had been hurt because the President had never invited him to the White House for a conference.[91]

While the President did not inspire the Bell Committee investigation, he on the other hand was far from unconcerned about the success of the Townsend movement. Consequently Townsend had some grounds on which to base what came to be hatred for the President. Roosevelt, for example, received a report from Dr. Stanley High on a fact-finding tour of the West warning that the Townsend organization was the most dynamic movement in the country. At least a dozen seasoned political observers had told High that by 1936 the Townsendites would have control of the political balance of power in their Congressional districts.[92]

Roosevelt had let it be known that he was strongly opposed to the Townsend Plan. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins quoted him as saying: "We have to have it [the Social Security Bill]. The Congress can't stand the pressure of the Townsend Plan unless we have a real old-age insurance system, nor can I face the country . . . ."[93] Even after the Social Security Bill had passed the President followed up his political interest in the Act by contacting the Social Security Board to find out

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[91] The New York Times, October 11, 1936, IV, p. 6.

[92] Donald R. McCloy, Angry Voices: Left-of-Center Politics in the New Deal Era (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1958), pp. 236-37.

[93] Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: The Viking Press, 1936), p. 294.

Superconstitutionality. Further, his validity had been hard because the President had never invited him to the White House for conferences.[91]

While the President did not hurl the Social Security Bill into legislation, he on the other hand was far from concerned about the success of the Townsend movement. Contemporary pressure had some growth to which to base what came to be feared for the President. Economically, for example, received a report from F. Ossofsky King on a lack-lustre loan of the week ending that the Townsend organization was the more dynamic movement in the country. At least a dozen Congressional politicians had said High that by 1936 the Congressmen would left control of the political balance of power in their Congressional districts.[92]

Roosevelt had let it be known that he was firmly opposed to the Townsend Plan. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins quoted him as saying "We have to have it [the Social Security Bill]. The Congress must stand the pressure of the Townsend Plan unless we have a real old-age insurance system, but can I face the country . . . ."[93] Even after the Social Security Bill had passed the President continued to pay political interest in the law by endorsing the Social Security Board to find out

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[91]The New York Times, October 11, 1936, p. 6.

[92]Donald R. McClay, Aspect Pressure Lobby-of-Number Politics in the New Deal Era (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1973), pp. 29b-31.

[93]Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Know (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 284.

how it planned to offset the political appeal of the Townsend Plan. John G. Winant, Board Chairman, replied that the Board was cognizant of the problem and that it was acting to devise a program of public information in regard to the Social Security Act. However, he believed that such a program should be positive in nature, rather than an attempt to discredit other plans.[94]

It was Dr. Townsend's hatred for the President which more than anything else was to persuade Townsend to join with Father Coughlin in the Union Party in the 1936 election.[95] In preparation for this political adventure, Dr. Townsend made every effort to gain back the loss in membership and revenue resulting from the Bell investigation. "Quota-Quint" bars were given to Townsendites who brought in five new members or more to the O. A. R. P. A circulation drive was made for the Townsend Weekly, and a special visual-aid department was established to go into the hill country of the South where newspapers and the radio had failed to carry the Townsend message. Special fund drives were begun; one in particular being designed for Dr. Townsend's own use in case the investigating committee should have decided to impound the O. A. R. P.'s funds.[96]

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[94] McCloy, p. 137.

[95] Infra, p. 122.

[96] Townsend National Weekly, June 15, 1936; May 11, 1936; May 18, 1936.

CHAPTER III

FATHER COUGHLIN AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The "Microphonic Apostle"

On January 19, 1930, a young priest of only regional renown gave a radio speech entitled: "Christ or the Red Fog." In part he said:

> Christian parents--American parents--is that the lesson which you wish to instill into the heart of your daughter? Do you want her to be the breeder of some lustful person's desires, and when the rose of her youth has withered, to be thrown upon the highways of socialism? Do you want atheism in her home and in her heart? Choose today! It is either Christ or the Red Fog of communism. It is either the marriage feast of Cana or the brothel of Lenin.[1]

Once again, after a decade of apathy, the American people were called upon to take up the cudgels against the well-known enemy. Many responded, as they had in the Red Scare, and they sent him thousands of letters in appreciation of the courageous stand he had taken. The priest, Father Charles E. Coughlin, realizing that he had found himself at last after nearly four years of broadcasting sermons, continued his assault on the communists for several weeks. By the end of this series he had achieved such popularity that CBS radio offered him a contract

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[1]Louis B. Ward, Father Charles E. Coughlin: an Authorized Biography (Detroit: Tower Publications, Inc., 1933), p. 70.

for a season of weekly broadcasts beginning in the following fall.[2]

Father Coughlin was born on October 25, 1891, in Hamilton, Ontario. A grandson of an Irish immigrant laborer and the son of a church sexton, Charles Coughlin was reared entirely under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. He attended parochial schools and a Catholic college and was encouraged to enter the novitiate of St. Basil's in Toronto, where, in 1916, he received his ordination for the priesthood. In that same year he was commissioned to teach at Assumption College near Windsor, Ontario, and soon was assisting in services across the river in Detroit.[3]

Father Coughlin was a barrel-chested man of athletic build who always dressed smartly. Believing that work was nine-tenths perspiration and one-tenth inspiration, he lived by the principle that the quantitative was the road to the qualitative.[4] His excessive energy was only equaled by his fervent and elementary faith, which he once expressed thusly:

> Do you know how I would live if I renounced religion and was illogical enough to disbelieve in a life beyond--in the real life? Why . . . I would surround myself with the most adroit highjackers, learn every trick of the highest banking and stock manipulations . . . and believe me--I would become the world's champion crook. If I didn't believe in religion and a happy beyond I would get everything for myself that I could lay hands on in the world.[5]

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[2]Ruth Mugglebee, Father Coughlin of the Shrine of the Little Flower; an Account of the Life, Work and Message of Reverend Charles E. Coughlin (Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1933), p. 202.

[3]Ward, pp. 6, 13.

[4]Ward, p. 288.

[5]Swing, Forerunners . . . , p. 51.

for a season of weekly broadcasts beginning in the Allegheny hill.[2]

Father Coughlin was born on October 25, 1891, in Hamilton, Ontario. A graduate of an Irish immigrant laborer and the son of a church sexton, Charles Coughlin was reared entirely under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. He attended parochial schools and a Catholic college and was encouraged to enter the novitiate of St. Basil in Toronto, where, in 1916, he received his ordination for the priesthood. In that same year he was commissioned to teach at Assumption College near Windsor, Ontario, and soon was assisting in services across the river in Detroit.[3]

Father Coughlin was a barrel-chested man of athletic build who always dressed neatly. Believing that work was ennobling preparation and one-sided inspiration, he lived by the principle that the easy way was the road to the qualitative.[4] His aggressive energy was only equaled by his fervent and eleemosynary faith, which he once expressed thusly:

> Do you know how I would live if I renounced religion and was illogical enough to disbelieve in a life beyond--in the real life? Why . . . I would surround myself with the most efficient bodyguards, learn every trick of the bigoted, banking and stock manipulations . . . and believe me--I would become the world's champion crook. If I didn't believe in religion and a happy beyond I would get everything for myself that a crooked lay hands on in the world.[5]

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[2]Ruth Higgins, Father Coughlin at the Shrine of the Little Flower; an Account of the life, work and sermons of America's Coughlin (Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1931), p. xiii.

[3]Ibid, pp. 5, 12.

[4]Ibid, p. 228.

[5]Sunne, Forerunners . . . , p. 51.

In May 1926 Bishop Michael James Gallagher of Detroit asked Father Coughlin to open a new church in Royal Oak, Michigan--a suburb of Detroit. The first months of parish work were disappointing, for only fifteen to seventeen people attended his Sunday services. However, in October Father Coughlin decided on an innovation and began broadcasting his sermons over the local radio station, hoping the laggardly would thereby be attracted to his church. The broadcasts proved successful and Father Coughlin continued giving his sermons over the air locally for three years. In 1929 he increased the size of his radio audience by adding stations in Cincinnati and Chicago. It was over this small network that Father Coughlin gave his "Christ or the Red Fog" sermon in January 1930.[6]

"The Golden Hour of the Little Flower," as Coughlin's radio program was called (named after his church, the Shrine of the Little Flower), became extremely popular during and following his 1930-31 season with CBS. He was effective not only because he lashed out at the communists and socialists, but also because he at the same time attacked the bankers.[7] In fact, he made it a practice to identify the bankers with the communists--thus combining into one the two important hatreds of the depression era. He was further aided by the gift of an ideal radio voice:

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[6]Ward, pp. 24-28.

[7]Charles E. Coughlin, Father Coughlin's Radio Discourses (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1932), p. 150.

> . . . a voice of such mellow richness, such manly, heart-warming, confidential intimacy, such emotional and ingratiating charm, that anyone tuning past it almost automatically returned to hear it again. It was without doubt one of the great speaking voices of the twentieth century. Warmed by the touch of Irish brogue, it lingered over words and enriched their emotional content. It was a voice made for promises.[8]

However, the mellow richness was heavily accented by vituperation which employed every propaganda device for effect. He did not hesitate to call names, to select facts unfairly, to lie, to capitalize on the prestige of the Catholic Church, to resort to glittering generalities, or even to utilize race hatred:[9]

> . . . and I presume that both you and I shall be labeled by the moral descendents of those who not only crucified the body of Christ but who have nailed His doctrines to the cross of human suffering "Radical." This is not a cheap fling at the Jewish and Gentile international bankers.[10]

An average radio audience for Father Coughlin was about 10,000,000 persons, though undoubtedly an occasional outstanding broadcast gave him a considerably larger audience.[11] This made him a leading radio

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[8]Wallace Stegner, "The Radio Priest and His Flock," The Aspirin Age, 1919-41, ed. Isabel Leighton (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), p. 234.

[9]Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant (ed.), The Fine Art of Propaganda; a Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), pp. 10, 23.

[10]Charles E. Coughlin, Eight Lectures on Labor, Capital, and Justice (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1932), p. 66.

[11]Social Justice, March 13, 1936; June 12, 1936; "Father Coughlin," Fortune, IX (February, 1934), p. 34.

personality. In fact, one poll of eastern radio stations revealed that he was the most popular "entertainer" of that network--even over Amos n' Andy, Fu Manchu, Jack Pearl, Ruth Etting, Ed Wynn, Kate Smith and Eddie Cantor.[12]

However, Father Coughlin's position of pre-eminence as a radio personality had been won only with some difficulty. Unfortunately for him, CBS was provoked by the anti-semitic overtones in his radio sermons and refused to renew his contract beyond the first season of 1930-31. The other networks joined the boycott against the priest.[13] There was no other recourse but for Father Coughlin to deal with independent stations. This was done, and until 1936 the entire Midwest and the Northeast were covered with stations carrying the "Golden Hour" program. The total numbered between twenty-seven and thirty.[14]

Fearing that censorship might be imposed on him, Father Coughlin did not attempt to obtain free time from the independent stations. Instead he purchased his radio time and the use of the telephone lines between stations. During 1932-34 the total cost for delivering his sermons over the airways was $202,856. In addition the Radio League

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[12]Ward, p. 241.

[13]Forrest Davis, "Father Coughlin," The Atlantic Monthly, CLVI (December, 1935), p. 664; The New York Times, March 22, 1934, p. 4.

[14]Davis, p. 659.

personality. In fact, one poll of radio critics revealed that he was the most popular "entertainer" of that network--only Amos 'n' Andy, for reasons, does Fred, Burns Allen, Jack Benny, Lum and Abner Gaston.[12]

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[12]Ibid., p. 241.

[13]Jerome Davis, "Father Coughlin," The Atlantic Monthly, CLXI (December, 1935), p. 698; The New York Times, March 22, 1935, p. 1.

[14]Ibid., p. 699.

of the Little Flower mailed copies of the radio sermons to 8,100,000 people in the same period of time, adding another $450,000 to the cost.[15] But money was willingly donated by his listeners to pay for these expenses. Father Coughlin even had enough money left over to build a plush $1,500,000 church, complete with a Charity Crucifixion Tower.[16]

The Early New Deal

F. D. R. was always willing to ally with individuals and groups who were extremist in their views, providing that they were strong enough to make the alliance worthwhile. Father Coughlin, as an oracle of public opinion, was certainly in this category. In the summer of 1932 he visited F. D. R. at Albany, and later F. D. R., then Governor, repaid Coughlin's visit by stopping off in Detroit on a Sunday and delivering a campaign speech on "Social Justice" in which he quoted from Papal Encyclicals, as well as from Jewish and Protestant texts.[17] The correspondence between the two men was remarkably full, and Coughlin undoubtedly looked upon himself as an aide and advisor for F. D. R.[18] However, it was in the spring of 1933, during the banking crisis in Detroit, that the priest for the first time became an informal spokesman for the New Deal. In close contact with the negotiations in

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[15]Ward, p. 210.

[16]The New York Times, December 29, 1935, IV, p. 2.

[17]Unofficial Observer, p. 41.

[18]Roosevelt, pp. 292-93; McCloy, p. 118.

Washington, which in the end salvaged the bank, he was asked by the Secretary of the Treasury to urge the people of Detroit to support the judgment of the United States government.[19]

Capitol Hill also wooed Coughlin. A star witness, he was called on to testify before a congressional committee headed by Hamilton Fish investigating communism in the Detroit area.[20] He also testified on behalf of the soldier's bonus, for remonetization of silver and against birth control before various House committees.[21] In June 1933, eighty-five congressmen asked the President to send Coughlin as a United States advisor to the London Economic Conference.[22]

Coughlin's influence was directly related to the amount of mail that Representatives, Senators, and the President received in response to his appeals. He deliberately organized a mailing campaign for the specific issues he was advocating. To every correspondent writing him, Coughlin sent a letter requesting that the correspondent send a letter to both his Representative and his Senator and then a copy of each back to Coughlin. The correspondent was also provided with a list of

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[19]Ward, p. 274; Raymond Gram Swing, "Father Coughlin: the Wonder of Self-Discovery," The Nation, CXXXIX (December 26, 1934), p. 732.

[20]Ward, p. 223.

[21]The New York Times, April 13, 1932, p. 1; January 17, 1934, p. 2; January 19, 1934, p. 7.

[22]Fortune, IX (February 1934), p. 110.

Representatives and Senators in order to make his letter writing easier.[23]

Until November 1934 Coughlin was a faithful servant of the New Deal. Louis B. Ward, Coughlin's biographer, writing in the late spring of 1933, virtually approved, on behalf of Coughlin, of every administration measure of the "hundred days" session--the banking reforms, the Economy Act, the farm programs, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the National Industrial Recovery Act, and the repeal of the eighteenth amendment.[24] When conservatives like Dean Acheson left the administration and supported Al Smith in the fall of 1933, following F. D. R.'s gold purchase program, Coughlin went to the defense of the New Deal in an able speech delivered in the Hippodrome in New York City. Commented James P. Warburg:

> One voice alone went steadily on preaching the gospel, a curiously electrifying voice, even if one disagrees with it--the voice of Father Coughlin . . . . Whether one agrees with Coughlin or not (and I do not), whether one likes or dislikes his methods (and I dislike them), one must unhesitatingly give him full credit for turning the tide of popular opinion at this critical juncture. In less than half an hour of blazing oratory he undid months of hard work by the opposition. If history shows that the President's monetary program was worth saving Father Coughlin deserves much of the credit for saving it.[25]

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[23] U. S., Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1933, LXXVI, Part 5, p. 4571.

[24] Ward, pp. 341-42.

[25] James P. Warburg, The Money Muddle (New York: A. Alfred Knopf, 1934), p. 157.

The reason for Coughlin's support of the New Deal was not due alone to the dominant personality of the President. It was also due to his firm belief that F. D. R. was striving to create the same kind of society that he (Coughlin) wished to see established. Coughlin's social and political ideas were a combination of Roman Catholic social justice concepts and the ideas of the American tradition of the left--or the agrarian-inflationary propositions which Long and Townsend accepted. Social justice in Catholicism was largely based on the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI. Leo, writing in 1891, attempted to deal with the problem of class division which the Marxists had capitalized on so successfully. He condemned both the liberals and the socialists for ignoring the respective rights of labor and property and urged both groups to find a solution to their conflict within the folds of the Church.[26] Pius went further than Leo, suggesting that a corporate society be created by the civil authorities in which men from both classes would join guild-like organizations for mutual self-interest. Said Pius:

> . . . complete cure will not come until this opposition [between classes] has been abolished and well-ordered members of the social body--industries and professions--are constituted in which men may have their place, not according to the position each has in the labor market but according to the respective social functions which each performs . . . these self-governing organizations, if not essential, [are] at least natural to civil society.[27]

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[26]Anne Fremantle (ed.) The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context (New York: The New American Library, 1956), pp. 166-95, passim.

[27]Ibid., p. 232.

The reason for Coughlin's support of the New Deal was not due alone to the dominant personality of the President. It was also due to his firm belief that F. D. R. was striving to create the same kind of society that he (Coughlin) wished to see established. Coughlin's social and political ideas were a combination of Roman Catholic social justice concepts and the ideas of the American traditions of the left--or the agrarian-inflationary propositions which long was favored accepted. Social justice in Catholicism was largely based on the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI. Leo, writing in 1891, attempted to deal with the problem of class division which the Marxists had capitalized on so successfully. He condemned both the liberals and the socialists for ignoring the respective rights of labor and property and urged both groups to find a solution to their conflict within the folds of the Church.[26] Pius went further than Leo, suggesting that a corporate society be created by the civil authorities in which men from both classes would join guild-like organizations for mutual self-interest. Said Pius:

> . . . complete care will not cease until this opposition [between classes] has been abolished and well-ordered members of the social body--industrys and professions--are constituted in which men may have their place, not according to the position each has in the labor market but according to the respective social functions which each performs . . . these self-governing organizations, if not essential, [are] at least natural to civil society.[27]

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[26] Anne Freemantle (ed.) The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context (New York: The New American Library, 1956), p. 100-101, passim.

[27] Ibid., p. 232.

However, Pius was clearly not advocating the corporate state of fascist Italy, for he emphasized very strongly the need for maintaining freedom of thought and action within the framework of cooperation.[28]

Coughlin accepted the social justice doctrines laid down in the papal encyclicals and applied them to the depression situation. He found that there was no social justice in the United States because bankers were depriving the working man of his fair share of business profits. The laborer, said Coughlin, should be looked upon as a social and personal unit, not simply as an industrial worker. Like the employer he had the right to self-sufficiency in regard to food, clothing, and shelter. However, the laborer had the additional privilege to organize into "vocational groups" in order to assure his right of self-sufficiency. Moreover, he said, it was the duty of the government to protect the laborer by assuring him of his prerogative to organize. In addition, Coughlin believed in considerable governmental intervention in other areas of the economy to insure that private enterprise operated according to the principles of social justice.[29] Undoubtedly he believed that the N. R. A. was a good first step in this direction.[30]

Father Coughlin was introduced to the desirability of inflation through two Wall Street mavericks, George M. LeBlanc and Robert M. Harriss. Their particular concern was for a re-evaluation of the dollar and they looked on Father Coughlin as a useful instrument for

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[28] Ibid., pp. 228-35.

[29] Coughlin, Eight Lectures on . . . , pp. 66, 72, 118-21.

[30] Supra, p. 91.

influencing public opinion in this direction. By 1932 they had joined Father Coughlin's staff in Royal Oak, Michigan and were advising him on economic matters.[31] They influenced Coughlin to advocate for a nationalization and re-evaluation of the gold ounce and the remonetization of silver in order to increase the amount of money in circulation.

Having adopted an inflationary policy, Coughlin was now in the same camp with the agrarian-inflationary bloc in Congress of which Huey Long was the unofficial leader. Coughlin certainly aided the silverites and inflationists considerably by encouraging F. D. R. to employ inflationary measures. For example, The New York Times reported that in the spring of 1933, when F. D. R. asked Coughlin to continue his support of the New Deal farm program, Coughlin answered that ultimately there would have to be some inflationary plan which "would put money into the pockets of the people."[33] Coughlin subsequently was to be rewarded when the President took the United States off the gold standard on April 19, 1933, and urged the adoption of the Thomas Amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act.[34]

However, in 1934 Coughlin's economic ideas changed, and he began to accept social credit doctrines. He felt that it was not enough to

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[31] Fortune, IX (February, 1934), pp. 37-38.

[32] Reeve, pp. 138-40.

[33] The New York Times, January 18, 1933, p. 10; March 23, 1933, p. 3.

[34] Supra, p. 12.

[illegible] opinion. In this direction, [illegible] Father Coughlin stated [illegible] economic matters.[31] [illegible] nationalization and re-valuation of the gold [illegible] of silver in order to increase the [illegible] of [illegible].

Having adopted an inflationary policy, Roosevelt was [illegible] even [illegible] long [illegible] advertising and inflationary [illegible] equally inflationary measures. For example, [illegible] that on the morning of 1933, [illegible] his support of [illegible] advisedly [illegible] and money into the pockets of the people.[32] [illegible] was to be [illegible] gold standard on April 19, 1933, and [illegible] amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act.[33]

However, in [illegible] economic [illegible] to secure social credit [illegible].

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[31] [illegible], 12 (February, 1934), pp. 39-40.

[32] [illegible], pp. 134-[illegible].

[33] The New York Times, January 14, 1933, [illegible]; [illegible] March 25, 1933, [illegible].

[34] [illegible], p. 12.

nationalize and re-evaluate gold, as had been done by the Gold Reserve Act of 1934. Rather, he began advocating that more currency, or credit, should be printed based on the real wealth of the nation--forests, fields, mines, factories and homes--and distributed to the idle.[35]

After the first flush of activity in 1933, the New Deal had moved into low gear. It did not follow up the N. R. A. with a genuine step towards the corporate society desired by Coughlin. The Administration began to free itself from the agrarian-inflationary bloc. One of its primary targets was Coughlin. In March, shortly before the Silver Purchase Act of 1934 was voted upon, the Treasury Department published a report entitled Hoarders of Silver which listed the organizations and individuals who had invested in silver. It revealed that the Radio League of the Little Flower held contracts for 500,000 ounces of silver worth $20,000--indicating that Father Coughlin was not a disinterested supporter of silver legislation.[36] The Silver Purchase Act did finally pass, but in a seriously weakened form.[37]

Inevitably, therefore, Father Coughlin was to withdraw his support from the Administration. By November of 1934 the New Deal in his mind was very far away from being "Christ's Deal."[38]

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[35]Coughlin, Eight Lectures . . . , pp. 76-81.

[36]Reeve, p. 69.

[37]Supra, pp. 13, 14.

[38]The New York Times, April 9, 1934, p. 27.

metallics and co-evaluate gold, as had been done by the Gold Reserve Act of 1934. Rather, he began advocating that each currency, or coin, should be priced based on the real wealth of a nation--land, forests, mines, factories and farms--and distributed to the people.[35]

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[35]Coughlin, Eight Lectures . . . . pp. 70-71.

[36]Ibid., p. 69.

[37]Ibid., pp. 12-13, 16.

[38]The New York Times, April 9, 1934, p. 27.

The National Union for Social Justice

On November 11, 1934, Coughlin announced the establishment of the National Union for Social Justice. Its purpose, he said, was to organize public opinion in a concerted effort to affect Congressional decisions.[39] The N. U. S. J. never was a political party according to Father Coughlin, but it did endorse candidates in national elections. Using the technique of the Townsend Clubs, the N. U. S. J. called on candidates to state their views for or against the principles advocated by the organization. Those agreeing with him were to be supported; those disagreeing were to be opposed.[40] Coughlin then appealed to the voters over the heads of the conventional party system. He was literally responding to Pope Leo XIII's appeal in the Papal Encyclicals on Social Justice that "Every Minister of holy religion must throw into the conflict all the energy of his mind, and all the strength of his endurance."[41]

The N. U. S. J. was organized on national, state, Congressional district, and local levels. The local units varied in size from a minimum of twenty-five to a maximum of two-hundred and fifty. They were required to hold monthly meetings. At the meetings a recent letter

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[39]Charles E. Coughlin, A Series of Lectures on Social Justice (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1935), p. 22.

[40]Social Justice, March 13, 1936.

[41]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, p. 69.

from Father Coughlin was to be read. A discussion of the N. U. S. J.'s sixteen points of social justice was to follow.[42]

The Shrine in Royal Oak was the national headquarters and from there all the activities of the organization were carefully controlled. Only approved speakers were allowed to discuss the principles of social justice before the local units. Further, all candidates selected by the Congressional districts for N. U. S. J. support had to be approved by the national office. In addition there were security regulations handed down from these national headquarters. Coughlin's Social Justice chastised the congressional district assembly meetings on one occasion for violating these regulations as to admission of authorized delegates, the careful double checking of delegate credentials, and the holding of meetings in halls where more than one entrance was used.[43]

There was no room for democracy in the National Union. Under its constitution, adopted at the national convention in July 1936, all power was placed into the hands of the president (who was Father Coughlin) and the Board of Trustees. The president had unlimited powers to make contracts, to engage and discharge employees, and to solicit, collect, expend, and borrow funds. He was elected by the convention assembled, but no nominations were accepted from the floor

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[42] Social Justice, March 27, 1936.

[43] Ibid., April 17, 1936; July 25, 1936.

of the convention. A nominating committee, appointed by the president, selected nominees for the presidential office. The trustees had the power to remove and appoint all officers (including one of their own number) except the president. They were also assigned the task of managing the organization down to the congressional district level.[44] Clearly, in the N. U. S. J. there was no possibility for the dissension which had weakened the Townsend movement. Coughlin did not even pretend to share his authority with the rank and file, as Townsend had done when he permitted the Citizens Maximi to assert nominal independence.[45]

Aside from the radio, the major method of communication within the N. U. S. J. was through Social Justice, a tabloid size weekly. The newspaper began publishing March 13, 1936, and by August 1936 it was claiming a circulation of 1,000,000.[46] The first issues of the paper were heavy reading, with page after page of repetition of the sixteen principles of social justice advocated by Coughlin. However, with the announcement of the creation of the Union Party in June 1936, the character of the organ changed sharply. The articles became shorter, bold print and pictures dominated its format, and rabid articles against the President and the New Deal replaced the earlier monotonous recitation of the principles of social justice.

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[44] Ibid., August 30, 1936.

[45] Supra, p. 81.

[46] Social Justice, August 3, 1936.

of the convention. A nominating committee, appointed by the president, selected nominees for the presidential office. The members had the power to remove and appoint all officers (including one of their own number) except the president. They were also empowered the task of managing the organization down to the congressional district level.[44] Clearly, in the U. S. S. R. there was no possibility for the dissension which had wracked the Communist movement. Chagalin did not even pretend to share his authority with the rank and file, as Trotsky had done when he permitted the Oppositions Bulletin to assert national independence.[45]

Aside from the radio, the major method of communication within the U. S. S. R. was through Social Justice, a tabloid size weekly. The newspaper began publishing March 12, 1936, and by August 1936 it was claiming a circulation of 1,000,000.[46] The first issues of the paper were heavy reading, with page after page of repetition of the sixteen principles of social justice advocated by Coughlin. However, with the announcement of the creation of the Union Party in June 1936, the character of the organ changed sharply. The articles became shorter, bold print and pictures dominated its format, and radio articles against the President and the New Deal replaced the earlier monotonous recitation of the principles of social justice.

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[44] Ibid., August 30, 1936.

[45] Supra, p. 81.

[46] Social Justice, August 3, 1936.

The N. U. S. J. grew very rapidly at first. Within two months after its founding Coughlin announced that it had 5,000,000 members. Shortly thereafter he absorbed another small maverick organization, the People's Power League headed by Reverend Herbert S. Bigelow of Cincinnati. But by August 1936 Coughlin had only added another million followers, making a total of 6,000,000 members. This was probably the peak figure for N. U. S. J. membership.[47]

Like the Townsend movement the N. U. S. J. was a mass movement forged around its leader. National Union followers were primarily bound together by the magical voice of the priest-demagogue. Every week they faithfully turned on their radios and heard his latest message. Additional solidarity came through the organizational set-up itself--the congressional assembly meetings and, most important, the national convention held in August 1936. Here, in the same building used on occasion by the major political parties for their national conventions, delegates from almost every N. U. S. J. unit had a chance to see and hear their leader in person.

In other respects, however, the Coughlin movement differed from the O. A. R. P. First of all, there was not the religious ferver in the National Union which was so important a part of the O. A. R. P. Undoubtedly Coughlin's faith prevented him from brazenly identifying himself with the divine as Townsend had done. Further, his Roman

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[47]The New York Times, April 25, 1935, p. 1; April 28, 1935, IV, p. 12; August 16, 1936, p. 27.

Catholic religion was as much a handicap as a help. Coughlin had to be careful not to make his organization an exclusively Catholic club, if he was to have any hope whatsoever of becoming a truly national figure. Secondly, his movement was frankly a political organization designed to overthrow the status quo. In contrast, the O. A. R. P. appeared more like a combination between a typical Rotary Club and a church fellowship organization.

However, the O. A. R. P. was undoubtedly more effective as an organization than the N. U. S. J.--if for no other reason than that it had a larger membership. Not only had Townsend begun his movement earlier, but the respectability associated with it appealed to a larger group. The Townsend Plan was one hundred per cent American and designed simply to restore the velocity of money and consequently prosperity. The Coughlin concept of social justice was not limited to an economic scheme but involved many ideas which were not in the American tradition.

The sixteen principles of social justice advanced can be divided into four categories. Under a miscellaneous category were principles one (1), thirteen (13), fourteen (14), and fifteen (15). They pleaded for liberty of conscience and education, an increase of taxes on the wealthy, a simplification of government, and for the conscription of wealth as well as men in time of war.[48]

Principle ten (10) deserves a category by itself. It asserted the right of labor to organize into unions and the duty of the government to

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[48]Charles E. Coughlin, A Series of Lectures on Social Justice (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1936), p. 8.

Catholic religion was as much a handicap as a help. Everyone had to be careful not to make his organization an exclusively Catholic club. If he was to have any hope whatever of becoming a truly national figure, Coughlin, his advisors saw, formally a political organization designed to overthrow the status quo. In contrast, the C. S. L. P. appeared more like a combination between a typical fraternal club and a church fellowship organization.

However, the C. S. L. P. was undoubtedly more effective as an organization than the S. L. S. L.—if for no other reason than that it had a larger membership. Not only had Townsend organized more members, but the responsibility associated with it appealed to a larger group. The Townsend Plan was now limited to old people and obviously to restore the velocity of money and consequently prosperity. The Coughlin concept of social justice was not limited to an economic scheme but involved many items which were not in the American tradition.

The sixteen principles of social justice advanced can be divided into four categories. Under a miscellaneous category were principles one (1), thirteen (13), fourteen (14), and sixteen (16). They pleaded for liberty of conscience and education, an increase of taxes on the wealthy, a simplification of government, and for the conservation of wealth as well as men in time of war.[40]

Principle ten (10) reserves a category by itself. It asserted the right of labor to organize into unions and the duty of the government to

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[40] Charles E. Coughlin, a Series of Lectures on Social Justice (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1935), p. 5.

protect these unions.[49] However, Coughlin obviously had an ambivalent attitude toward unions, for he frequently attacked organized labor, accusing it of being filled with racketeers and of being guilty of class bigotry for preventing a non-union man from working alongside a union man.[50] The explanation for his attitude lay in the fact that Coughlin deplored class conflict and was far more interested in creating the corporate society advocated by Pius XI than in balancing off management with strong labor unions. He admitted that labor was in a weak bargaining position; but he said that it was the function of the government to intervene on behalf of the employee. He even went so far as to state that labor should not strike unless the government failed to intervene or clearly manifested a favoritism toward the employer.[51]

The contemporary reality of industrialism with its concomitant economic effects was most distasteful to him. In his view property was owned by God and only lent to man for his common use. The hourly wage contract was particularly obnoxious to Coughlin. Ideally, he would have substituted for it a contract of partnership in which the owner and laborer shared the profits of the business.[52]

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[49] Ibid.

[50] The New York Times, December 3, 1933, p. 2; Coughlin, Eight Lectures on . . . , pp. 123-29.

[51] Social Justice, March 27, 1936.

[52] Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, p. 30.

The third category involves what principle sixteen (16) summed up as the upholding of human rights over and above property rights. Coughlin asserted [in principles two (2) through five (5)] that everyone had the right to a just and living annual wage, and to assure this right, private property should be controlled by the government and even nationalized if necessary.[53] Coughlin was not explicit about which industries might be subject to nationalization. However, he did propose that the federal government carry out an extensive program of permanent public works involving such projects as highway building, reforestation, hydroelectric and irrigation development, and home building. The purpose of a permanent public works program was to provide immediate employment for every man, at $1,500 per year, the moment when private industry failed to employ him at a living annual wage.[54]

The last category refers to Coughlin's pet scheme, the government owned central bank. The central bank would replace the privately owned Federal Reserve System and henceforth restore to Congress its powers to coin and regulate the value of money. The chief duty of the central bank would be to maintain the cost of living on an even keel and to assure the repayment of dollar debts with equal value in dollars. It would also order the recall of all non-productive bonds given to the

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[53]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 8.

[54]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, pp. 67-9; Social Justice, August 3, 1936.

banks in the past for borrowing purposes and prohibit in the future the sale of tax-exempt bonds. [Principles six (6), seven (7), eight (8), eleven (11), and twelve (12)] .[55]

Actually Coughlin wished to do more than simply restore to Congress the power to coin and regulate the value of money, for his proposed bill permitted the governing board of the central bank to be chosen by the people--with each state having one representative. In short the center of monetary management of the United States would have shifted from Wall Street to somewhere in the Dakotas. In order to keep the cost of living steady, the proposed act would have transferred the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor to the Treasury Department and assigned it the task of determining the correct relation between the amount of money in circulation and the amount of unemployment and changes in prices and wages. With this information the governing board of the central bank would be able to determine the rate at which more currency and credit should be pumped into the economy to maintain stable purchasing power. As needed, additional currency was to be forced into the economy by (1) paying the extraordinary and then the ordinary expenses of government by currency issue, (2) by paying civil servants and public works laborers in currency issue, and (3) by creating a one hundred per cent currency reserve behind all demand deposits. The backing for this tremendous issuance of currency was to be not gold or silver, but the "real wealth" of the nation--its

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[55]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 8.

raw materials and man-made assets.[56]

The significance of Coughlin's sixteen points lay in the fact that they indicated a marked departure from the American tradition. This neither Long nor Townsend did. Of course, the central bank idea had been an important element of the Populist heritage. But with the exception of this factor, most of the rest of the sixteen points, which referred to the nationalization of industries and the establishment of a corporate society, advocated an unusual extension of governmental intervention. Coughlin, unlike Townsend and Long, seldom even gave lip service to laissez-faire economics and the American frontier liberties associated with it. The reason for this was that Coughlin did not place any value on free enterprise per se. In fact, to him, the profit principle in laissez-faire economics was morally wrong. Coughlin, then, was really something of an anomaly in American politics.

However, the definite un-American tinge of Coughlinism probably did not reveal itself outwardly to his followers. They were primarily conscious only of the fact that Coughlin was against the international banker--perhaps the most hated person in the early depression years.

National Politics: 1935-36

In September 1935, a secret meeting was held between the President and Father Coughlin at Hyde Park.[57] It was never revealed

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[56]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, pp. 166-73.

[57]The New York Times, September 12, 1935, p. 13.

[illegible]

The significance of Coughlin's stand in polemic Italy is not that they indicated a serious threat to the Roosevelt regime. Coughlin neither lost nor increased ground. Of course, [illegible] been an important element of the Roosevelt coalition. [illegible] exception of this factor, most of the same criticisms [illegible] which referred to the anticlericalism in Roosevelt and the [illegible] of a corporate society, associated in general [illegible] of international. Coughlin, unlike [illegible] service to Italian-Fascist economics and the [illegible] associated with it. The reason for this [illegible] place any value on free enterprise per se. In fact, [illegible] principle in Italian-Fascist economics [illegible] was really something of an anomaly in American politics.

However, the actually anti-Fascist [illegible] did not really signify exactly the [illegible] consciousness only of the [illegible] banker—perhaps the most hated [illegible].

Coughlin Activities 1932-34

In October of 1932, a [illegible] President and Father Coughlin [illegible].[57] [illegible]

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[56] Coughlin, A series of [illegible] . . . , 1935, [illegible].

[57] The New York Times, [illegible] 1932, [illegible].

what they discussed, but undoubtedly F. D. R. made one last attempt to heal the breach between them that had begun to appear in November 1934 when Coughlin established his National Union for Social Justice. F. D. R. was singularly unsuccessful, for the political priest only continued his bitter verbal attack against the Administration. Whereas in 1933 and 1934 Coughlin's keynote phrase had been "Roosevelt or Ruin" it was now "Roosevelt and Ruin."[58] Mincing no words he lashed out:

> Thus, like a grotesque colossus this Administration stands astride the two extremities of social error. While its golden head enunciates the splendid program of Christian justice, its feet of sordid clay are mired, one in the red mud of Soviet communism, and the other, in the stinking cesspool of pagan plutocracy.[59]

As the new year of 1935 opened, Father Coughlin tested the effectiveness of his recently founded National Union by giving battle to the Administration over the ratification of the World Court protocols. F. D. R. had decided to press for United States membership in the World Court despite the fact that Hoover had failed to get Senate approval in 1930. On January 16, 1935, he sent a special message to Congress advocating passage of the protocols. Shortly before the vote was to be taken he held a White House conference with doubtful Senators.[60]

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[58]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 8.

[59]Ibid., p. 41.

[60]Herring, p. 991.

what they discussed, but undoubtedly F. D. R. made one last attempt to heal the breach between them that had begun to appear in November 1932 when Coughlin established his National Union for Social Justice.

F. D. R. was originally unsuccessful, for the political priest only continued his bitter verbal attack against the Administration. Between in 1933 and 1936 Coughlin's keynote phrase had been "Roosevelt or ruin" it was now "Roosevelt and Ruin."[58] Minding no words he lashed out:

> Thus, like a prodigious colossus this Administration stands astride the top crossroads of social error. While its golden hand encourages the splendid progress of Christian Socialism, the feet of social sin are mired, one in the red mud of Soviet communism, and the other, in the stinking swamps of pagan plutocracy.[59]

As the new year of 1936 opened, Father Coughlin tested the effectiveness of his recently founded National Union by giving notice to the Administration over the ratification of the World Court protocols. F. D. R. had decided to press for United States membership in the World Court despite the fact that Hoover had failed to get Senate approval in 1932. On January 16, 1935, he sent a special message to Congress advocating passage of the protocols. Shortly before the vote was to be taken he held a White House conference with doubtful Senators.[60]

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[58]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 8.

[59]Ibid., p. 42.

[60]Ewalt, p. 271.

Meanwhile Coughlin and other isolationists were arousing public opinion against Senate approval of the protocols. On January 27, 1935, the Sunday before the vote was held, Coughlin gave a talk entitled: "The Menace of the World Court." He advised his hearers that the Senate was about to hand over United States sovereignty to the World Court--a vile creation of the League of Nations. This meant, he said, relinquishing the right to maintain an army and navy and to coin money and regulate its value. Then he added that joining the World Court meant also joining up with the Rothchilds, Warburgs, Morgans, and Kuhn-Loebs to keep the world safe for inevitable slaughter.[61] In response to Coughlin's appeal the Senate received 40,000 telegrams in two days.[62]

The Administration attempted to counter the effectiveness of Coughlin's opposition by having its own supporters similarly employ the radio. Among the pro-World Court speakers were General O'Ryan and Monsignor John A. Ryan of the Catholic University of America.[63] However, assistance from members of the Catholic Faith was not enough, and the World Court protocols failed to pass by seven votes. Secretary of State Cordell Hull realized that the vote was to be close, but he believed that had the vote been taken on Friday, January 25, 1935, as

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[61]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, pp. 122-34.

[62]The New York Times, January 30, 1935, p. 1.

[63]Ibid., January 29, 1935, p. 2.

scheduled, they undoubtedly would have passed.[64] He added:

> Over the weekend the adverse propaganda increased furiously. Father Coughlin, who was closely listened to and blindly followed by a large mass of uninformed, prejudiced persons, bitterly opposed the resolution . . . . Neither Coughlin nor [Will] Rogers knew the real issues involved, but their opposition hurt painfully.[65]

Father Coughlin himself was elated and claimed that the National Union had proved itself as a political force.[66]

For his part Roosevelt was angered at Coughlin's success. In writing to Elihu Root on the defeat of the protocols he complained: "The deluge of letters, telegrams, Resolutions of Legislatures, and the radio talks of people like Coughlin turned the trick against us."[67] But the President was also philosophical about the Administration defeat. He told Henry L. Stimson:

> You are right that we know the enemy. In normal times the radio and other appeals by them would not have been effective. However, these are not normal times; people are jumpy and very ready to run after strange gods. This is so in every other country as well as our own.
> I fear common sense dictates no new method for the time being--but I have an unfortunately long memory and I am not forgetting either our enemies or our objectives.[68]

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[64]Cordell Hull, Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. I (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 389.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, p. 139.

[67]Roosevelt, p. 451.

[68]Ibid., p. 450.

sustained, they undoubtedly would have passed.[64] He added:

> Over the weekend the adverse propaganda increased tremendously. Father Coughlin, who one clearly listened to and blindly followed by a large mass of uninformed, prejudiced persons, bitterly opposed the resolution . . . Neither Coughlin nor [Will] Rogers knew the real issues involved, but their opposition hurt politically.[65]

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[64] Cordell Hull, Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. I (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 368.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 139.

[67] Roosevelt, p. 421.

[68] Ibid., p. 420.

Coughlin's opposition to the World Court membership dramatized his foreign policy thinking. More explicitly Coughlin was not only an isolationist but also strongly anti-British and pro-Franco during the Spanish Civil War.[69] He also tended to endorse Benito Mussolini's fascist government in Italy on the basis that he had saved Italy from communistic atheism.[70] It was not until the late Thirties, however, that Coughlin was to become an out-and-out fascist.[71]

The defeat of the World Court protocols was an important victory for Coughlin. But it was at most a negative victory, and Coudhlin was not to be successful when he strove for a positive victory in the enactment of legislation.

Probably the most important points in the sixteen principles of social justice had to do with establishing a central bank. Yet Coughlin was unable to gain from Congress more than a perfunctory consideration of his proposals. In November 1934 the priest met with Robert M. Harris, George M. LeBlanc, and Senators Elmer Thomas, Burton K. Wheeler, and Pat McCarran, to plan future monetary reform strategy. The men found they disagreed as much on how to bring about inflation as they agreed in principle on the need for it.[72] This

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[69]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 14.

[70]Social Justice, October 26, 1936.

[71]Infra, p. 146.

[72]The New York Times, November 25, 1934, p. 2; Reeve, p. 88.

preliminary meeting led two months later to the calling of a National Monetary Conference in Washington, D. C. Sixteen monetary reform, farm, and veterans' organizations met under its sponsorship and agreed to work for the conversion of the Federal Reserve System into a new government owned central bank.[73] Subsequently thirteen bills for a central bank were introduced in the First Session of the Seventy-Fourth Congress.[74] One of them, the Nye-Sweeney, or Coughlin Bill, was voted on in the Senate as a substitute amendment for the Banking Act of 1935. It was defeated by a vote of fifty-nine to ten.[75]

Next to his central bank bill, the most important legislation in Coughlin's view was the Frazier-Lemke Farm-Loan Act. This bill, which would have refinanced farm loans by printing additional currency, had been first introduced in Congress in 1930. It had received increasing support since then, and the Administration had prevented a certain vote on the bill in the 1934 session of Congress by keeping it bottled up in committees. However, at the end of that session a discharge petition had obtained the requisite number of 145 signatures and only the adjournment of the session prevented action from being taken on it.[76]

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[73] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part I, p. 539.

[74] Reeve, p. 90.

[75] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part II, p. 11906.

[76] Reeve, p. 66.

preliminary meeting had the member Green to the building of a National Monetary Conference in Washington, D. C. Sixteen monetary experts, men, and veterans of monetary conferences met under the sponsorship and agreed to work for the convening of the National Monetary Congress into a new government monetary bank.[73] Consequently hearings bills for a central bank were introduced in the first session of the Seventy-Second Congress.[74] One of them, the Fess-Kemmerer, or Coughlin Bill, was voted on in the Senate as a substitute amendment for the Glass Act of 1932. It was defeated by a vote of fifty-nine to one.[75]

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[73]Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, p. 232.

[74]Ibid., p. 70.

[75]Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 1, p. 11904.

[76]Ibid., p. 66.

In 1935, under the pressure applied by the chairman of the House Rules Committee, John O'Connor, the House passed an amendment to its rules requiring that henceforth a majority of the House (i.e., 218) had to sign the discharge petition to force a bill out of committee.[77] The Frazier-Lemke forces thereupon concentrated anew on obtaining the requisite number of signatures. On April 19, 1935, they seemingly were victorious for they succeeded in securing 218 signatures. But the Administration was saved by a hostile analysis of the bill's provisions by the Farm Credit Administration and a letter of unqualified opposition from President William Green of the A. F. of L. The House decisively rejected the Act 235 to 142.[78]

Throughout the 1935 and 1936 sessions, Coughlin campaigned vigorously for the Frazier-Lemke bill. He even went so far as to send his Washington representative to the President's aide, Marvin McIntyre, with the message that the priest wanted the Farm-Loan Bill passed and that if Roosevelt didn't apply the necessary pressure, the Administration would receive a concentrated Coughlin attack. McIntyre told the priest's representative, however, that this savored very strongly of blackmail and that he wouldn't even put such a proposition up to the President.[79]

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[77]Herring, p. 986.

[78]Reeve, p. 103.

[79]Ickes, p. 687.

In 1935, under the pressure applied by the chairman of the House Rules Committee, John O'Connor, the House passed an amendment to the rules requiring that henceforth a majority action (i.e., 218) be to allow the discharge petition to force a bill out of committee.[77] The Frazier-Lemke forces therefore concentrated anew on obtaining the requisite number of signatures. On April 15, 1935, they seemingly were victorious for they accumulated 218 signatures. But the administration was saved by a month's analysis of the bill's provisions by the Farm Credit Administrator and a letter of unqualified opposition from President William Green of the A. F. of L. The House decisively rejected the act 235 to 164.[78]

Throughout the 1935 and 1936 sessions, Coughlin campaigned vigorously for the Frazier-Lemke bill. He even went so far as to send his Washington representative to the President's aide, Marvin McIntyre, with the message that the priest backed the Farm-Loan Bill passed and that if Roosevelt didn't apply the necessary pressure, the Administration would receive a concentrated Coughlin attack. McIntyre told the priest's representative, however, that it is against very strongly of blackmail and that he wouldn't even put such a proposition up to the President.[79]

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[77]Sarting, p. 966.

[78]Ibid., p. 103.

[79]Ibid., p. 687.

Having been thwarted by the White House, Coughlin singled out Representative John O'Connor to be the target for his umbrage, calling him the President's "hatchet man."[80] O'Connor finally felt obliged to answer the priest on the House floor. He accused him of using libelous language in reference to the President, the Speaker of the House, and himself. In the brief debate that followed Coughlin was defended by his major supporter in the House, Martin L. Sweeney,[81] Coughlin later made the Frazier-Lemke issue campaign material in 1936.

It has been mentioned how Father Coughlin allied with Huey Long against the Administration's less than prevailing wage feature in the Work-Relief Bill.[82] Coughlin similarly allied with Long in drumming up support for the Patman Bonus Bill. In early May 1935, he made a special appeal for the passage of the Patman Act. As usual, telegrams poured into Congress following his address. Only this time Congress responded in Coughlin's favor and passed the Bonus Bill.[83] However, the President promptly vetoed the Act. But within an hour the House had over-ridden the veto 322 to 98, and the scene of the drama turned to the Senate. Coughlin again made an appeal for the passage of the Patman Act in a Madison Square Garden speech before a N. U. S. J.

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[80] Social Justice, March 13, 1936.

[81] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1936, LXXX, Part 2, pp. 2313-319.

[82] Supra, p. 18.

[83] The New York Times, May 7, 1935, p. 1.

Having been admonished by his Senate peers, Coughlin began an hyperaesthetic plea delivered to the tribune for his masses, calling his the "prodigious Christian men."[80] Coughlin clearly felt obliged to answer the pleas on the House floor. He accused him of using Christian language in reference to the Trusteeship, the worker of the House, and himself. In the brief debate that followed Coughlin was defended by his major supporter in the House, Martin L. Sweeney.[81] Coughlin later made the Trustee-Labor issue remarks entered in 1934.

It has been mentioned how James Coughlin allied with Sweeney against the Administration's less than preferable work relief bill.[82] Coughlin equally allied with Long in drumming up support for the Pension Bill. In early May 1935, he made a special appeal for the passage of the Pension Act. As usual, it poured into Congress following his address. Only one week Congress responded to Coughlin's favor and passed the Social Bill.[83] However, the President promptly vetoed the act. The bill's sponsor the House had over-ridden the veto 322 to 98, and the sponsor of the dream waited to the Senate. Coughlin again made an appeal for the passage of the Pension Act in a Radiam Square Garden speech before a . . . .

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[80] Social Justice, March 13, 1934.

[81] Congressional Record, 73th Cong., 1st Sess., 1934, LXXV, Part 2, pp. 2313-2315.

[82] Supra, p. 18.

[83] The New York Times, May 1, 1935, p. 1.

audience.[84] Although the customary deluge of telegrams and letters descended on Washington following his speech, they were to no avail. The Senate sustained the veto by the unexpected margin of 54 to 40.[85]

The following year, the Vinson Bonus Bill was passed over the President's veto. It eliminated the paper money feature of the Patman Bill and replaced it with a provision for borrowing the bonus funds.[86] Coughlin ridiculed this measure, saying it was only a device to pay additional interest to the bankers.[87] Noting Coughlin's opposition to the modified Bonus Bill, Representative John O'Connor observed that Coughlin was obviously not the least interested in the welfare of the veterans, but only in inflation.[88]

As Huey Long's, so Father Coughlin's opposition to the New Deal deteriorated rapidly to the level of opposition for the sake of opposition. In 1935 and 1936 almost every Administration proposal received his wrath. The Social Security Act was attacked as "niggardly" the farm program was judged a failure for permitting the destruction of agricultural produce, and the demise of N. R. A., which he had favored, was blamed on the Administration--with Coughlin asserting

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[84] Ibid., May 26, 1935, IV, p. 2.

[85] Reeve, p. 101.

[86] Supra, p. 17.

[87] Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, p. 27.

[88] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 2, p. 2315.

that the White House had deliberately written the Act so that it could be later declared unconstitutional.[89]

In addition to his harassment of the Administration's program in Congress, Coughlin, by the spring of 1936, was beginning to prove his National Union modestly effective at the polls. In the Ohio and Pennsylvania primaries, out of a total of sixty-four N. U. S. J. endorsed nominees from both major parties, twenty-seven Coughlin candidates won. However, the N. U. S. J. was probably not the decisive factor except in a few instances.[90]

Counteraction

Congress in 1935 and 1936 was beleaguered on both the right and the left by fanatical and not so fanatical pressure groups attempting to obtain a hearing for their particular programs. It was not surprising therefore that Congress should have tried to control and limit the efforts of these groups. In 1936 an anti-lobbying bill (H. R. 11663) nearly passed. It would have required the reporting of receipts, disbursements, and contributions, and the registration of lobbyists of organizations attempting to influence legislation.[91]

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[89] Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1936, pp. 43, 79.

[90] The New York Times, May 1, 1936, p. 2; May 14, 1936, p. 1; Social Justice, May 8, 1936.

[91] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 9, p. 9430.

that the White House had deliberately written the act so that it could be later declared unconstitutional.[89]

In addition to his harassment of the Administration's program in Congress, Coughlin, by the spring of 1936, was beginning to prove his National Union noisily effective at the polls. In six Ohio and Pennsylvania primaries, out of a total of sixty-four U. S. Senatorial nominees from both major parties, twenty-seven Coughlin candidates won. However, the N. U. C. was probably not the decisive factor except in a few instances.[90]

Conservatism

Congress in 1935 and 1936 was bombarded on both the right and the left by functional and not so functional pressure groups attempting to obtain a hearing for their particular programs. It was not surprising therefore that Congress should have tried to control and limit the efforts of these groups. In 1936 an anti-lobbying bill (H. R. 11663) nearly passed. It would have required the reporting of receipts, disbursements, and contributions, and the registration of lobbyists of organizations attempting to influence legislation.[91]

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[89] Coughlin, A Series of Lectures . . . , 1935, p. 49, 72.

[90] The New York Times, May 1, 1936, p. 2; May 14, 1936, p. 17; Social Justice, May 6, 1936.

[91] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., part 5, p. 7420.

Coughlin felt that the anti-lobbying bill was aimed particularly at Townsend and himself.[92] There certainly was no doubt that the legislation was drawn up to include them, but it was also a mistake for Coughlin to presume that he and Townsend were the major targets. The activities of utility lobbyists were probably the more important subjects of this Congressional act. Yet it was significant that Congress should have even attempted to include its severe critics (like Townsend and Coughlin) in an anti-lobbying bill. Certainly such control would have been a limit on the rights of free speech and petition. Undoubtedly this was the reason the conference report was finally defeated in the House.[93] Coughlin himself credited its final defeat to his primary victories in Ohio and Pennsylvania.[94]

For its part the Administration was very hesitant about openly attacking Coughlin. Being the representative of a most important religious group, the radio priest was almost a political untouchable. But further, Coughlin did not hold public office and as a political layman he was not easily subject to the same type of maneuver which the Administration employed against Long.

Roosevelt adopted the deliberate policy of avoiding open conflict with Coughlin. He was even willing to let him harangue day

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[92] Social Justice, April 10, 1936.

[93] Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 4, pp. 4514-16.

[94] Social Justice, June 29, 1936.

after day without answer from the White House. When Ickes was unable to quietly submit to this punishment and issued a counter verbal fusilade at the agitators on the left,[95] the President made it known that he strongly disapproved of his Secretary's action--especially the reference to Coughlin, which he termed "very unwise."[96] In connection with Johnson's attack on Long and Coughlin,[97] Roosevelt made a comment which revealed the motives behind his espousing a course of outward inaction:

> There is another thought which is involved in continuous leadership--whereas in this country there is a free and sensational Press, people tire of seeing the same name day after day in the important headlines of the papers, and the same voice night after night over the radio. For example, if since last November I had tried to keep up the pace of 1933 and 1934, the inevitable histrionics of the new actors, Long and Coughlin and Johnson would have turned the eyes of the audience away from the main drama itself! [Italics mine.][98]

Further, F. D. R. believed it was better to let demagogues like Coughlin tire themselves out and make their presence obnoxious to the public:

> Out of all the confusion of the 1935 session of Congress I am inclined to think that there will be such disgust on the part of the average voter that some well-timed, common sense campaigning on my part will bring the people to their senses.[99]

Having decided that he should bring about no overt conflict

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[95] Supra, p. 47.

[96] Farley, Jim Farley's Story . . . , p. 52.

[97] Supra, p. 45.

[98] Donald Day (ed.), Franklin D. Roosevelt's Own Story; Told in His Private and Public Papers (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951), p. 239.

[99] Roosevelt, p. 453.

after day without answer from the White House. When Lowe was unable to quickly submit to this punishment and issued a complete verbal diatribe at the agitators on the left,[95] the President made it known that he strongly disapproved of his Secretary's action--especially the reference to Coughlin, which he termed "very unwise."[96] In connection with Johnson's attack on Long and Coughlin,[97] Roosevelt made a comment which revealed the motives behind his espousing a course of outward moderation:

> There is another thought which is involved in continuous leadership--whether in this country than in a free and democratic press, people tire of seeing the same face day after day in the important headlines of the papers, and the same voice night after night over the radio. For example, if since last November I had tried to keep up the pace of 1933 and 1934, the inevitable disappointment of the new authors, Long and Coughlin and Johnson would have turned the eyes of the audience away from the main stream itself. [Italics mine.][98]

Further, F. D. R. believed it was better to let demagogues like Coughlin take themselves out and make their presence conclusive to the public:

> Out of all the confusion of the 1935 session of Congress I am inclined to think that there will be such disgust on the part of the average voter that some well-timed, common sense campaigning on my part will bring the people to their senses.[99]

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[95]Sugre, p. 40.

[96]Farley, Jim Farley's Story . . . , p. 52.

[97]Sugre, p. 41.

[98]Donald Day (ed.), Franklin D. Roosevelt's Own Story Told in His Private and Public Papers (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951), p. 232.

[99]Roosevelt, p. 453.

with Coughlin, Roosevelt contented himself at first with a careful watching of the priest's activities. In this connection an elaborate study of Coughlin's broadcasting network was prepared for the White House, and Farley checked on postal receipts at the Royal Oak post office to measure the response to one of the priest's appeals for funds.[100] Also, the President's aide, Louis M. Howe, received regular reports on Coughlin from Hall Roosevelt, F. D. R.'s brother-in-law, who was then living in Detroit.[101]

When criticism of Coughlin within the Catholic Church became visible, the Administration seized the opportunity and encouraged the Church to silence the ardent priest. On one occasion Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy, Assistant to the Rector of the Catholic University of America, sent a letter to the President stating that four bishops, three monsignori, and two priests had met in New York to devise a plan of action to offset Coughlin. They had agreed that the President should not take cognizance of the rebel priest's attacks and that F. D. R. should permit his own friends within the Church to defend him.[102] The most hopeful response the White House received was from His Eminence, William Cardinal O'Connell of Boston who reported that Coughlin was to be called to Rome to head the American College there.

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[100]Burns, p. 215.

[101]Roosevelt, p. 461.

[102]McCloy, p. 150.

But the appointment was never actualized.[103]

More immediately effective were efforts of the President's lay Catholic friend, Frank Murphy of Michigan, who had been recently appointed Governor-General of the Phillipine Islands. In May 1935 Roosevelt told Farley:

> Right now Frank Murphy is doing a splendid job in handling Coughlin. I'm going to make him High Commissioner of the Phillipines and bring him back after a month or two so that he may devote his entire time to the Coughlin situation.[104]

In the summer of 1936 Murphy returned and ran as Roosevelt's candidate for Governor in the Michigan Democratic primary. There was no doubt that F. D. R. had chosen Murphy to run because of his close former friendship with Father Coughlin and his popularity with Michigan citizens.[105]

When Murphy returned the New Deal was facing the Coughlin threat in a new form. In June Father Coughlin had launched the Union Party. This political adventure on the radio priest's part was to require additional shrewd actions like the Frank Murphy decision.

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[103] Burns, p. 212.

[104] Farley, His Memoirs . . . , p. 52.

[105] The New York Times, August 13, 1936, p. 6.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNION PARTY

Political Alliances

It was almost inevitable that Coughlin should have sponsored a third party in the 1936 election. First of all, his ambition was too great for him to be content with endorsing Congressmen through the N. U. S. J. Secondly, his opposition to F. D. R. was now so complete that any action against him short of a political campaign would have indicated weakness. Realizing that as a Catholic priest it was impossible for him to run for a political office, he did the next best thing. He created a personal political party and nominated personal presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

He knew that achieving any success whatsoever in the election depended on the assistance of other leftist oriented political organizations. To this end he negotiated with Dr. Townsend and Gerald L. K. Smith for the support of their movements. In June 1936 Townsend and Smith agreed to join forces with Coughlin, and thus the Union Party was founded.[1] Fortunately for Coughlin a

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[1] The New York Times, June 18, 1936, p. 3; June 19, 1936, p. 10; June 24, 1936, p. 13.

farmer-labor attempt to enter a third party in the campaign had collapsed in May 1936.[2] Therefore, his only competition in the third party field lay with the Socialist, Communist, and Prohibition Parties.

As the Union Party's presidential standard-bearer, Coughlin chose William Lemke of North Dakota. Lemke had been one of the first political bosses of the Non-Partisan League and was elected State Attorney General in 1930 under the Non-Partisan label. In 1932 he was elected to Congress as a Republican, but with Democratic support.[3] As a Representative he distinguished himself by being co-author of the Farm Mortgage Moratorium Bill and the Farm-Loan Act. Coughlin had collaborated with him in efforts to win passage of these bills, and in this connection the two men had become acquainted. Because of their mutual interests, Lemke was an ideal presidential candidate for Coughlin. Furthermore, Lemke was an ideal nominee in that it was important for Coughlin to broaden the appeal of the Union Party, and the logical direction in which to look for such appeal was among the discontented farmers of the Middle West--where Lemke had his greatest following. At first the indications were that this strategy might well enable the Union Party to make an impressive showing in the election.

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[2]McCloy, p. 140.

[3]Paul W. Ward, "Lemke: Crackpot for President," The Nation, CXLIII, (July 11, 1936), p. 36.

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[2]Hofley, p. 140.

[3]Paul W. Ward, "Lemke: Champion for Prosperity," The Nation, CXLIII, (July 11, 1936), p. 36.

For example, the president of the National Farmers' Union stated that Lemke would have support from many members of his organization.[4]

As Lemke's running mate Coughlin chose Charles O'Brien, a lawyer for the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen of America.[5] Coughlin undoubtedly selected O'Brien because he was from Massachusetts, which was the strongest N. U. S. J. state in the East due to its large Irish-Catholic population.

The Union Party itself was almost a fictional creation in that there was very little organizational difference between it and the National Union for Social Justice. The only regular means of communication open to Lemke were Coughlin's radio broadcasts and Social Justice. Further, the Union Party did not even have a political convention, perhaps the most important symbol of the solvency of a political party in the public's view. The N. U. S. J. substituted its national convention for that of the Union Party. Coughlin completely dominated the Cleveland get-together, treating Lemke more like a lower echelon guest speaker than the organization's presidential candidate. Under the priest's tutelage the convention even went through the motions of reaching a weighty decision when it voted to endorse Lemke for President by a vote of 8,153 to 1.[6] Coughlin also made a

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[4]McCloy, p. 144.

[5]Social Justice, July 13, 1936.

[6]The New York Times, August 16, 1936, p. 1.

show of unity with Townsend and Smith by inviting them to speak to his National Union.[7]

The platform of the Union Party presented a modest attempt to incorporate the particular proposals of each of the major participants in the party. Lemke won the inclusion of his Farm-Loan bill and a plank advocating higher tariffs on agricultural goods. Smith succeeded in obtaining a statement requesting a limitation on income and inheritances--though no amount was stated. Townsend achieved a plank which vaguely referred to the need for old age assistance. But Coughlin's sixteen principles of Social Justice were nearly all retained in the Union Party Platform--his central bank plan and his program for vast public works projects being explicitly stated, and his belief in the need for a corporate society being strongly implied.[8]

Lemke was aware of the fact that Coughlin was using him as a tool for increasing the prestige and power of the National Union. But Lemke felt that after the election Coughlin would withdraw from the Union Party and leave him free to continue building up the Party as he wished. He knew he could not win. But, as many others in the past, he was anxious to found a new political party devoted solely to furthering the needs of the depressed farmers of the Middle West. Confident that Coughlin would leave the Union Party, Lemke was willing to share the spotlight with his friend and sponsor until that time.[9]

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[7]Social Justice, August 24, 1936.

[8]Ibid., June 12, 1936.

[9]Johathan Mitchell, "Liberty Bill Lamke," The New Republic, LXXXVIII, (August 12, 1936), p. 8.

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[7]Social Justice, August 26, 1936.

[8]Ibid., June 22, 1936.

[9]Jonathan Mitchell, "Liberty Bill Lemke," The New Republic, LXXXVIII, (August 12, 1936), p. 5.

Dr. Townsend had decided to join with Father Coughlin in the Union Party only after considerable soul-searching. In revealing his decision to his followers he began with a quote from Martin Luther:

> "Here I Stand! I Can Do No Other! God Being My Helper!" [He then continued:] If we get together, all we then need to do is to walk up to the ballot box on a November day and to vote the political misfits and the political gangsters into eternal oblivion.
>
> You will, therefore, see me consorting with some strange "bed fellows" these coming days.[10]

Thus he took the final step in opposing Roosevelt, even at the expense of associating with rabble-rousers lacking the more genteel attributes of Townsend stump speakers.

The important person in the Townsend movement at this time was Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, the former organizer for Huey Long's Share Our Wealth Society. Smith had been ousted from the Share Our Wealth Society by Long's successors, and there was little doubt but that in joining the Townsend movement he was simply looking for a comfortable berth.[11] Apparently his design was to associate himself with the existing forces of discontent believing that by 1940, when inevitably chaos would be supreme in America, his name would be on everyone's lips as a political savior.[12] Since Smith for all practical

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[10] Townsend National Weekly, June 15, 1936.

[11] House Select Committee Investigating Old-Age Pension Organizations, Hearings . . . , 1936, Vol. I, p. 882.

[12] The New York Times, July 21, 1936, p. 12.

purposes was no longer head of the Share Our Wealth Society, it was not really true that the Union Party embraced the three dominant political groups of the early depression years. Coughlin himself was aware of this, and he stated publicly on one occasion that the Share Our Wealth Society, to his knowledge, no longer had a national organization.[13]

Smith's association with Townsend began during the Bell Investigation. In fact Townsend stated that it was Smith who urged him to walk out of the Congressional investigation and defy his inquisitors.[14] Shortly thereafter Smith was appointed a director of the O. A. R. P.[15] He left his imprint on the Townsend organization when at his suggestion, the name of the O. A. R. P. was changed to the Townsend Recovery Plan in order to broaden the appeal of the movement among younger people. But more significantly, he proposed the establishment of an auxiliary youth organization whose alleged mission was to guard the polls in November and assure an honest count for Lemke. Men for this police action were to be selected on the basis of their physical and mental qualifications. The age group Smith wished to draw his shock troops from were the sixteen to twenty-six year olds.[16]

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[13] Ibid., August 14, 1936, p. 1.

[14] Ibid., July 20, 1936, p. 6.

[15] Townsend National Weekly, June 29, 1936.

[16] The New York Times, July 21, 1936, p. 12.

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[13]Ibid., August 16, 1936, p. 1.

[14]Ibid., July 20, 1936, p. 6.

[15]Townsend National Weekly, June 29, 1936.

[16]The New York Times, July 21, 1936, p. 12.

The auxiliary youth organization never became a reality, but the definite fascist overtones in Smith's suggestion indicated the change which had taken place within the Townsend movement due to his influence.

The Townsend Convention was held in July 1936. As soon as the first session was underway the Convention split into two rival camps over the issues of Smith's ascendency in the organization and Dr. Townsend's decision to join the Union Party. Many of the important leaders in the movement believed it was a mistake to (1) enter the dirty game of presidential politics at all, and (2) to enter it with compatriots like Coughlin and Smith. Three directors of the organization thereupon announced publicly to the convention that they were going to vote for F. D. R.[17] Also, a regional director bought radio time to tell Townsendites that their leader had been hoodwinked by two designing clerics, whose only talents were to give "indecent" and "radical and un-American" speeches.[18] The rank and file at the convention, taking the cue from the dissenting leaders, similarly objected to being pushed into endorsing Lemke, and they passed a resolution preventing the Townsend organization from officially endorsing a Presidential or Vice-Presidential candidate. They also issued invitations to all the Presidential nominees to speak before the convention. Norman Thomas was the only other candidate besides

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., July 20, 1936, p. 1.

The military junta dissolved the Congress, [illegible]
decision leading overturns in Lima's [illegible]
which had been taken without the [illegible]
initiative.

The Convention convened [illegible]
first session was marked by the [illegible]
over the issues in Lima's [illegible]
Congress' decisions to [illegible]
leaders in the movement [illegible]
dirty game of presidential politics [illegible]
compartiose like Cerpilla [illegible]
also strongly announced [illegible]
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"radical and undemocratic [illegible]
convention, taking the [illegible]
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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., July 20, 1956, p. 2.

Lemke to respond. He used his speaking opportunity to lecture the delegates on the inanity of the Townsend Plan.[19]

The schism in the Townsend Movement seriously weakened it. The defecting leaders were dismissed by Townsend, but they continued to attack the Townsend Recovery Plan for selling out to Coughlin and Smith. One of them even started a competing movement and another brought suit against Townsend, demanding an accurate accounting of the organization's funds. The income of the Townsend Recovery Plan fell sharply as a result of the schism with the result that all the regional offices were closed down, leaving only one central office to be maintained in Chicago.[20]

However, Dr. Townsend's mystical hold over the rank and file prevented his organization from falling completely apart. He even managed to make a showing of united Townsendite support for the Union Party by having Coughlin and Smith, as representatives of their respective organizations, speak to the Townsend convention. Coughlin, in his speech dispensed with the dignity of his divine office and removed his coat and clerical collar. He said of F. D. R.:

> It is most significant, my friends, that the hand of Moscow leads the communist leaders in America, and aims to pledge their support for Franklin Delano Roosevelt where communism stands.

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[19] National Townsend Weekly, July 29, 1936.

[20] The New York Times, July 21, 1936, p. 12; August 25, 1936, p. 1; August 13, 1936, p. 2.

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[19] National Townsend Weekly, July 29, 1936.

[20] The New York Times, July 21, 1936, p. 12; August 29, 1936, p. 15; August 12, 1936, p. 2.

Spacing his speech with epithets directed at the President, he called him a "liar" and a "betrayer" and shouted a concluding entreaty to his audience: "I ask you to purge the man who claims to be a democrat . . . I mean Franklin Double-Crossing Roosevelt."[21]

Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, not to be outdone, stirred the Townsendites to a frenzy by asserting that the people who had been sneeringly described as the " 'lunatic fringe' " were about to "take over the government."[22]

Lemke's speech, in comparison to those given by the two preachers, was mild. He kept on the good side of the Townsendites by claiming he was one hundred per cent for an old-age pension, though he did not specify the amount. Otherwise he limited himself to expounding on the need for inflation, with the exception of a brief appeal to the former Share Our Wealth Society followers, at which time he said: "I say to you that the greatest Democrat that this nation produced in the last one hundred years was Senator Huey Long."[23]

The Campaign

The campaign staged by the Union Party was a vituperative one. Coughlin continued to publicize the decision of the Communist Party

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[21] The New York Times, July 17, 1936, p. 1; July 19, 1936, IV, p. 1; July 20, 1936, p. 1.

[22] Ibid., July 19, 1936, p. 1.

[23] Ibid., July 21, 1936, p. 12.

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[21]The New York Times, July 31, 1936, p. 3; [illegible] 1936, [illegible]
p. 11 July 20, 1936, p. 1.

[22]Ibid., July 19, 1936, p. 1.

[23]Ibid., July 21, 1936, p. 12.

to support F. D. R. and finally dared the President to repudiate it. Under advice, Roosevelt later did so.[24] For his part Townsend adopted the techniques long employed by Coughlin. His Weekly lost its comparative reserve and began making use of banner headlines berating the Administration. It also now made use of political cartoons. One in particular depicted unemployed youth "crucified on the cross of government stupidity at Washington."[25]

Every effort was made to contact potential Union Party voters. To this end, both Townsend and Coughlin used the radio to a considerable extent. As a climax to their radio activities, on election eve, Townsend purchased a ninety-six station hook-up and Coughlin a sixty-three station network.[26] Further, Townsend attempted to reach Union Party supporters by boosting the circulation of his Weekly. Coughlin tried to win converts by curtailing normal activities in the local N. U. S. J. units and substituting extensive membership drives.[27]

Neither Coughlin nor Townsend expected Lemke to win. However, they did hope he would receive enough votes to prevent Roosevelt or Landon from obtaining fifty per cent of the electoral vote, which, under the provisions of the Twelfth Amendment of the Constitution,

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[24] Burns, p. 279.

[25] Townsend National Weekly, October 26, 1936.

[26] Ibid.; Social Justice, November 2, 1936.

[27] Social Justice, July 27, 1936.

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[24] Warren, p. 275.

[25] Townsend National Weekly, October 26, 1936.

[26] Ibid., Social Justice, November 2, 1936.

[27] Social Justice, July 27, 1936.

would have required that the election be thrown into the House of Representatives. At this point the Union Party believed Coughlin and Townsend would be in a position to bargain with Landon and would offer him votes in return for the implementation of the Townsend Plan and the central bank. Significantly, a similar deal with F. D. R. was unthinkable on their part.[28]

The Union Party leaders had some reason to hope that their strategy might work. To begin with, astute political observers in June had predicted that the Union Party might receive as many as 5,000,000 votes. In the same month the returns from the Maine primary came in. They revealed that one Union Party Congressional candidate had made an excellent showing, even if he had not won, while another Republican candidate espousing Coughlin's and Townsend's ideas ran unopposed. Similarly, at the end of the summer, Louis B. Ward, Coughlin's biographer and Washington lobbyist, lost a Michigan Senatorial primary contest by only 3,500 votes. F. D. R.'s personal selection of Democratic candidate for Governor, Frank Murphy, thereupon called Michigan a doubtful Democratic state, believing that Ward might take 120,000 votes away from the national ticket. On the basis of Murphy's analysis F. D. R. decided to include Michigan in his campaign swing.[29]

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[28] Townsend National Weekly, October 19, 1936.

[29] The New York Times, June 21, 1936, IV, p. 6; September 20, 1936, IV, p. 6; October 6, 1936, p. 1; November 8, 1936, IV, p. 4.

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[28] Townsend National Weekly, October [illegible], 1936.

[29] The New York Times, June [illegible], 1936, [illegible] 1936, [illegible] October [illegible], 1936, p. [illegible]

Meanwhile, in Massachusetts, Thomas C. O'Brien, the Union Party Vice-Presidential candidate, ran for Senator as a write-in candidate in the Democratic primary. He made an unusually good showing for a write-in candidate and was therefore expected to undermine the size of the Democratic vote in November.[30] At the same time the Republican candidate for Senator, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., endorsed in principle the Townsend Plan in an attempt to gain Townsendite support in his contest with Governor James Curley.[31]

On the national level Governor Alfred M. Landon, Republican Presidential candidate, dignified the Union Party by publically recognizing that Dr. Townsend at least was a political force. He not only received Dr. Townsend in a friendly manner in Topeka but later gave a speech in Los Angeles in which he condemned the Bell Investigation of the Townsend Movement.[32] Then, on November 2, Landon sent this message to the Townsend State Area Manager for California:

> You may be assured that I will do anything as far as lies within my power to see that your group has a fair and impartial hearing.
>
> As Chief Executive of the nation I would direct my affairs just as Chief Executive of Kansas, and would be glad to discuss the Townsend plan with Dr. Townsend in the

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[30] Ibid., September 30, 1936, IV, p. 6.

[31] Townsend National Weekly, October 26, 1936.

[32] The New York Times, October 11, 1936, IV, p. 6; October 21, 1936, p. 1.

White House just as I would with the leader of any substantial group.[33]

On the other hand there was other evidence to indicate that the Union Party was not doing so well. On the West Coast, a normal Townsend stronghold, the Townsend candidates did very poorly, winning only one primary election for a national office during the summer.[34] Similarly, Coughlin was having difficulty in the East. On one occasion he told his followers, through Social Justice, that they must not fool themselves into believing that they were as yet a powerful political force. He said the National Union was operating in only twenty-nine states and was vigorous in no more than fourteen. On another occasion he chastised his followers, telling them that he was frankly disturbed by the lack of interest and activity. He asked them, are you really working for the election of those men who pledged their support to our principles?[35] Even in the Middle West the anticipated enthusiasm for an agrarian oriented third party did not materialize. For example, the farm Holiday Association national convention was unable to decide whether or not to endorse Lemke, and six state presidents walked out in protest of the failure to act.[36]

Perhaps it was inevitable that the Union Party should have had

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[33] Ibid., November 3, 1936, p. 18.

[34] Ibid., August 23, 1936, IV, p. 7.

[35] Social Justice, August 24, 1936; October 12, 1936.

[36] The New York Times, July 2, 1936, p. 6.

[illegible]., November 3, 1938, p. 1.

[illegible]., August 3, 1938, p. 1.

[illegible], August 4b, 1938, [illegible] 32, p. 1.

[illegible], July 8, 1938, p. [illegible].

only spotty success, for it was little more than a nominal coalition of political action groups. The Share Our Wealth Society was never really a part of it, and what little association there was terminated when Dr. Townsend suddenly broke with Gerald L. K. Smith in October. The break occurred when Townsend found out that Smith had been soliciting financial help for the creation of a fascist organization. Commented Townsend:

> Let no one make any mistake about my feelings toward Fascism, Communism and other forms of nationalism . . . . The Townsend organization is American in its foundations and ideals and I do not propose to allow any person with dictatorship tendencies, whether they be under the guise of the New Deal or nationalism, to stampede the Townsend movement . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I repeat, Gerald Smith shall henceforth have no connection with this organization.[37]

Townsend and Coughlin found it impossible to work together. During the Townsend Convention it was announced that Lemke, Coughlin, Townsend, and Smith were to barnstorm the country together, but this plan never materialized. Further, in announcing the cancellation of the joint campaign, Coughlin pointedly added that Townsend should not even dream of his $200 a month pensions until the Federal Reserve System had been nationalized.[38] In turn Townsend much later commented:

> Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice never took more definite form than embodying its desires into a set of 16 principles. It seems to me it was a one-man organization

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[37] Townsend National Weekly, November 2, 1936.

[38] The New York Times, August 14, 1936, p. 1.

> at best, dependent for direction upon the pastor's most recent radio address . . . .[39]

In fact, Gerald L. K. Smith's statement that he and Townsend hated F. D. R. so bitterly that they would join with Coughlin only to bring about the defeat of the President was probably an accurate declaration of the extent of agreement among the three men.[40]

Some effort was made to reconcile the two social-economic programs of Coughlin and Townsend. For example, a pamphlet entitled, "Townsendism Plus Coughlin Equals Power," was published by an individual devoted to the cause of unity in the Union Party. His argument was that Coughlin's Social Justice program was a sound method for creating a purchasing medium and that the Townsend Plan was complementary in that it provided for an excellent system of distribution through the hands of the aged.[41]

However, such feeble efforts to bring unity into the Union Party accomplished little. The basic fact remained that both Coughlin and Townsend had a faith in their particular schemes which precluded the acceptance of any competing plans. Their followers were tied to them personally and it is doubtful that their respective adherents could have effectively transferred their faith. Townsend's failure to get

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[39] Townsend, p. 171.

[40] The New York Times, June 22, 1936, p. 1.

[41] Mason, William Kennedy, Townsend Plus Coughlin Equals Power, a Treatise Designed to Aid Co-operation, (Malden, Mass.: William Kennedy Mason, 1936), p. 4.

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[41]Mason, William Kennedy, Townsend Plan Coughlin Social Justice, a Treatise Designed to Aid Co-operation, [illegible], Kansas: William Kennedy Mason, 1936?, p. 4.

his convention to endorse Lemke was evidence of this.[42] Lemke, in contrast to Coughlin and Townsend, had no body of followers to win over to new ideas. Thus, he himself was able to accept Coughlinism and the principle of the Townsend Plan and incorporate both orthodoxies into his agrarian program. Yet Lemke was definitely closer to Coughlin than he was to Townsend, for not only were Coughlin's views ideologically closer to his than Townsend's but he was Coughlin's personal choice as the Union Party standard-bearer.[43]

The Defeat

As the results of the November election began to come in, it became clear that Roosevelt had led his party to a very decisive victory. The final tally credited F. D. R. with receiving 27,476,673 votes, Landon with 16,679,583, Lemke with 882,479, Thomas with 200,522, Browder with 80,159, and Colvin (the Prohibition candidate) with 37,661. In no state, except New Hampshire, was the margin between the two major parties smaller than the Union Party vote, and as F. D. R. carried that state, the Union Party cannot be credited with having influenced the Democratic party's success. Thus as a third force in the presidential race the Union Party was a complete failure. The Party had entered the race in thirty-four states under various titles, but in two important states, New York and California, it was not even

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[42] *Supra*, p. 124.

[43] *Supra*, p. 120.

on the ballot. The states in which the Union Party made its best showing were Massachusetts, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota.[44]

Lemke made the best showing of any third party candidate since the 1924 election when La Follette received 16.6 per cent of the popular vote. In 1932 Norman Thomas polled 884,781 votes which approached Lemke's 1936 strength. Not until the 1948 election were third parties to again demonstrate appeal at the ballot boxes. In this election both Strom Thurmond and Henry Wallace each received over a million votes.[45]

In the Congressional races Social Justice claimed that sixty Union Party endorsed candidates were elected. The Townsend National Weekly enlarged the number of victories to one hundred and eleven. However, none of the candidates who were elected had Union Party designation.[46] In fact the only Congressional contest really affected by the intervention of the Union Party was the Lodge-Curley Senatorial race in Massachusetts. There Charles O'Brien, the Union Party candidate, drew Democratic votes away from Governor James Curley, enabling Lodge to win.[47]

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[44]U. S., Department of Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1937, 1938, p. 159.

[45]Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, Vol. 2, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 904-5.

[46]Townsend National Weekly, November 16, 1936; Social Justice, November 16, 1936.

[47]The New York Times, November 8, 1936, IV, p. 4.

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Lemke made the best showing of any third party candidate since the 1924 election when La Follette received 16.6 per cent of the popular vote. In 1932 Norman Thomas polled 881,951 votes which approached Lemke's 1936 strength. For much the 1936 election was third parties to again demonstrate equal at the ballot boxes. In this election both Huey Long and Huey Walker were rejected over a million votes.[45]

In the Congressional races Social Justice claimed that every Union Party endorsed candidate were elected. The Christian Herald Weekly enlarged the number of victories to one hundred and eleven. However, none of the candidates who were elected had Union Party designation.[46] In fact the only Congressional contest really affected by the intervention of the Union Party was the Lodge-Curley senatorial race in Massachusetts. There Charles O'Brien, the Union Party candidate, drew Democratic votes away from Governor James Curley, enabling Lodge to win.[47]

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[45]Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, Vol. 2, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 504-5.

[46]Christian Herald Weekly, November 14, 1936; Social Justice, November 16, 1936.

[47]The New York Times, November 5, 1936, IV, p. 4.

Townsend's reaction to F. D. R.'s victory and the clear defeat of the Union Party was to claim that at least the Townsend Plan had been vindicated at the polls. But this claim was a misrepresentation of the facts since the assertion of having elected one hundred and eleven Townsend endorsed Congressmen glossed over the fact that only twenty-one of them were, by the Townsend National Weekly's own admission, friendly to the Townsend Plan.[48] This figure was furthermore markedly below the fifty-nine votes the Townsend Plan received in the House vote of April 1935.[49]

Coughlin, in contrast, did not maintain the pretense of victory after Social Justice initially claimed the election of sixty Union Party endorsed candidates. Instead, he publically admitted defeat, dissolved the National Union, and announced that he would no longer give his radio talks.[50] His farewell address indicated some bitterness however:

> . . . I regret to announce that fewer than 10 per cent of the National Union members lived up to their promises . . . I recognize that they have not deserted the 16 principles. I am humble enough to admit that their desertion had been a personal affair, insofar as they preferred to follow the leadership of someone who is more capable and competent to give them bread and butter, shelter and clothing, than am I.[51]

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[48] Townsend National Weekly, November 16, 1936.

[49] Supra, p. 61.

[50] Social Justice, November 16, 1936.

[51] Ibid.

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[48] Townsend National Weekly, November 16, 1936.

[49] Supra, p. 65.

[50] Social Justice, November 16, 1936.

[51] Ibid.

Lemke, for his part, remained firm in the conviction that the Union Party should continue.[52] But without the dynamic leadership of Coughlin and the prestige Townsend had contributed to it, the Party was too weak to continue and it was unable to participate in even the 1938 national election.

The failure of the Union Party was due to many factors. Certainly the division within it between Coughlin and Townsend hindered its success. Towards the end of the campaign Townsend had even urged his followers to vote for Landon in states where Lemke was not on the ballot,--indicating that Landon's wooing of Townsend had been successful.[53]

A great handicap to the Party was the traditional suspicion in America of third parties. This suspicion has been sufficiently rooted to make it legally difficult in many states to get a new third party on the ballot. Since the days of the Greenback Party, the chief appeal of radical parties has been the stands they have taken on social and economic issues that the major parties either ignored or substantially agreed upon. But in 1936 the tussle between the "New Dealers" and the "Economic Royalists" was a genuine social and economic clash. Therefore the average voter, despite the

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Townsend National Weekly, October 19, 1936.

depression, did not feel the necessity, as in 1912 and 1924, to join a third party in order to be represented.[54]

The New Deal political strategists were well aware of the threat of a leftist third party and they made every effort to make all dissidents feel welcome in the Democratic Party. Undoubtedly they were doubly motivated to do so because they believed that the Republicans were helping to finance the Union Party.[55] However, Townsend had almost cancelled himself out as an effective New Deal opponent due to dissension within his movement and to his flirtations with Landon. Therefore the Administration concentrated its efforts on weakening Coughlin's and Lemke's appeal in the East and Middle West.

In the Middle West many Wisconsin Progressives and Minnesota Farmer-Laborites had expressed admiration for the leaders of the Union Party. For example, the resolute Farmer-Laborite, Henry Teigan, had written that he felt the goals of the National Union for Social Justice, more than those of any other organization of the country, resembled the program of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party.[56] However, the Administration had been courting Governor Floyd Olson, the leader of the Farmer-Labor Party, since the New Deal had come into power, and

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[54] The New York Times, July 19, 1936, IV, p. 3; November 8, 1936, IV, p. 4.

[55] Roosevelt, pp. 626-7.

[56] McCloy, p. 116.

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The New Deal political strategists were well aware of the threat of a lavish third party and they made every effort to make all disenchanted Deal welcome in the Democratic Party. Undoubtedly they were doubly motivated to do so because they believed that the Republicans were helping to finance the Union Party.[55] However, Townsend had almost completed himself out as an effective New Deal opponent due to dissension within his movement and to his flirtations with leaders. Therefore the Administration concentrated its efforts on undermining Coughlin's and Lemke's appeal in the East and Middle West.

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[56]McCoy, p. 116.

in May 1936 its suit was rewarded when Olson wrote La Follette warning that to support a third party ticket might defeat Roosevelt and elect a "fascist Republican."[57] In spite of the fact that Olson reiterated his support for F. D. R. shortly before he died in August, by October the Lemke-Coughlin ticket had made inroads among the Farmer-Laborites. To counter this, the Administration forced the withdrawal of Democratic candidates for Governor and Senator in order to appease Farmer-Laborites tempted to vote for Lemke. Meanwhile, Wisconsin Progressive Party leaders had pledged their support of the New Deal.[58]

The New Deal similarly made an alliance with organized labor. In April 1936 an organization was specifically created for this purpose called Labor's Non-Partisan League. Among its leaders were John L. Lewis; Sidney Hillman, president of Amalgamated Clothing Workers; and George L. Berry, president of Printing Pressmen's Union. It was frankly a device to permit members of organized labor who disapproved of both the old party labels to vote for F. D. R.[59] In the campaign it spent well over a million dollars in political rallies and radio broadcasts, particularly in Ohio and Pennsylvania. There was little doubt that the Union Party would have received many more votes among

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[57]George Hillman Mayer, Political Career of Floyd B. Olson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), p. 297.

[58]The New York Times, August 20, 1936, p. 11; October 12, 1936, p. 21.

[59]Ibid., August 16, 1936, IV, p. 1.

the workingmen if the Non-Partisan League had not come to the President's assistance.[60]

In September another leftist oriented organization was created to assist in the re-election of the President. It was called the Progressive National Committee Supporting Franklin D. Roosevelt for President, and was formed by Thomas Amlie, Farmer-Labor Governor Elmer Benson, Hugo Black, Edward Costigan, Sidney Hillman, Robert and Philip La Follette, Fiorello La Guardia, John L. Lewis, Maury Maverick, George Norris, and Lewis Schwellenbach. It was announced that it would cooperate with the Non-Partisan League. It issued an important statement directed at the Union Party to the effect that a division among liberals would only help the reactionary forces in America elect the Republican Party in November.[61]

The President would have undoubtedly preferred that counter-measures against Coughlin's Union Party remain in the category of quiet political maneuvering. However, a small but sharp drop in F. D. R.'s popularity, following the announcement of Lemke's candidacy, apparently persuaded the President that a more direct attack on his part against the Union Party was necessary.[62] On June 7, 1936, an American Institute of Public Opinion poll revealed

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[60] McCloy, 153.

[61] Ibid., pp. 153, 55.

[62] Burns, p. 271.

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[59]Hofstadter, 131.

[61]Ibid., pp. 133, 55.

[62]Burns, p. 171.

that 53.5 per cent of the voters favored Roosevelt and 1.8 per cent Lemke. After that date the President's share of the vote dropped steadily until, by September 6, 1936, it was 49.3 and Lemke's had increased to 5.0.[63] Coincidentally, in August the President made a flood inspection trip to Cleveland during the opening day ceremonies of Coughlin's National Union convention. His motor cavalcade conveniently passed right by the municipal auditorium where the National Union was meeting.[64] In his September opening campaign speech F. D. R. again indirectly acknowledged that the Union Party had drawn away some of his strength when he accepted Coughlin's challenge to repudiate the support of the Communist Party:

> . . . Desperate in mood, angry at failure, cunning in purpose, individuals and groups are seeking to make Communism an issue in an election where Communism is not a controversy between the two major parties.
>
> Here and now, once and for all, let us bury that red herring, and destroy that false issue . . . .
>
> . . . I have not sought, I do not seek, I repudiate the support of any advocate of Communism or of any other alien "ism" which would by fair means or foul change our American democracy . . . .[65]

Democratic Party strategists in October followed up Roosevelt's defense of the Party with a paid political broadcast by Monsignor John A. Ryan of Catholic University of America. Ryan accused Coughlin

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[63] Cantril, p. 591.

[64] The New York Times, August 13, 1936, p. 2.

[65] Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. V: The People Approve (New York: Random House, 1938, p. 384.

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[63] Gallup, p. 322.

[64] The New York Times, August 13, 1936, p. 6.

[65] Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. 5: The People Approve (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 388.

of bearing false witness against his neighbor by stating that F. D. R. was a communist. He challenged Coughlin's economic theories, stating that the priest's proposals ". . . find no support in the encyclicals of either Pope Leo XIII or Pope Pius XI."[66]

The New Deal was immeasurably aided by the fact that the program it had adopted to cure the depression was beginning to prove successful. Although there were still eight or nine million unemployed, four million workers formerly unemployed had found jobs. Payrolls in the manufacturing industries had doubled since 1932. Commercial and industrial failures were still frequent in 1936, but they were one-third of what they had been four years earlier. At the same time the physical volume of industrial production had been augmented almost twice over and capital issues had increased sixfold since 1933. The farmers also had benefitted from the New Deal, for their cash income which had fallen to four billion in 1932 had by 1935 recovered to almost seven billion.[67]

However, within this general recovery many individuals were living on drought-stricken farms or within the unemployed ranks. But through prompt federal assistance to drought affected areas and the inauguration of the Works Progress Administration enterprises,

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[66]The New York Times, October 9, 1936, p. 1.

[67]Burns, pp. 266-68.

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[66]The New York Times, October 7, 1936, p. 1.

[67]Ibid., pp. 265-66.

the New Deal won the allegiance of these groups that otherwise would have been given to the Union Party.[68]

One last handicap for the Union Party was the criticism from within the Roman Catholic Church of Coughlin's political activities. If the criticism had not been present many more Catholics undoubtedly would have responded to Coughlin's call to vote for the Union Party and to throw out the Democrats. Actually criticism had begun early in his public career. His Eminence, William Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, in 1932 made a public speech in which he chastised Coughlin:

> We do not like to hear almost hysterical addresses from ecclesiastics. They have a way of attracting attention they do not deserve.
>
> . . . The individual in Michigan takes it into his head to talk to the whole world. To whom is he responsible? Some people prefer to talk rhetoric instead of facts . . . .
>
> The Catholic Church is a tremendously serious organization, for it deals in human souls. You can't begin speaking about the rich, or making sensational accusations against banks and bankers, or uttering demagogic stuff to the poor. You can't do it, for the church is for all.[69]

In 1935 the liberal Catholic journal, The Commonweal, similarly attacked Coughlin. It emphasized the deliberate attempt made by him to associate the National Union for Social Justice principles with those of the Catholic Church. In defense of the Church it pointed out that Father Coughlin had laid down the principles of the National Union

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[68] The New York Times, July 9, 1936, IV, p. 3; October 18, 1936, IV, p. 6.

[69] Ward, p. 265.

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[68]The New York Times, July 9, 1936, IV, p. 3; October 18, 1936, IV, p. 6.

[69]Ibid, p. 265.

himself and that they were not supported by either the doctrines or the corporate authority of the Church.[70]

Probably Father Coughlin would not have been able to continue his political oratory had it not been for the support of his bishop, Michael James Gallagher of Detroit. Bishop Gallagher not only granted Coughlin permission to speak over the radio but he also defended and encouraged him in his crusade against social injustice. Bishop Gallagher said of him:

> It required the genius and method of Father Coughlin to bring these teachings into the homes of the people. Only one man in the United States, or for that matter in the whole world, seemingly dared to teach the people the principles which were contained in the Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo . . . of Leo XIII and Pius XI.
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> Had he lived in Russia before the Revolution and had he possessed the radio facilities, there would probably be no communism, no atheism, no "League of the Godless" there today.[71]

Even as late as April 1935 Gallagher was steadfast in his defense of Coughlin. Speaking on Coughlin's radio program he upheld the subject matter of the priest's sermons, saying that they were ". . . based on truths which I have directed him to preach."[72] He also made clear that Coughlin was an authorized priest in the Catholic Church and that the radio priest's utterances should be

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[70] "Father Coughlin's Authority," The Commonweal, XXII, No. 5, (May 31, 1935), pp. 113-14.

[71] Ward, p. ix.

[72] The New York Times, April 22, 1935, p. 12.

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[71]Ibid., p. 144.

[72]The New York Times, April 22, 1935, p. 12.

respected in accordance with his authoritative position.[73] Only in 1936 during the Union Party campaign did Gallagher qualify his support of Coughlin. After the priest's "Liar" speech at the Townsend Convention, Gallagher expressed public disapproval of the use of this epithet, but he also emphasized that he had not rebuked Coughlin for this indiscretion.[74]

Despite Gallagher's defense, Coughlin became more and more the subject of clerical criticism. The Archbishop of Chicago, George Cardinal Mundelein, denounced those who would drag the Church into politics and went out of his way to praise the fairness of the President.[75] In September 1936 both Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati and Bishop Joseph Schembs of Cleveland criticized Coughlin for referring to Roosevelt as an "anti-God."[76] In the same month the unofficial Vatican organ, Osservatore Romano, rebuked Coughlin for his "liar" speech.[77] When Coughlin declared the Vatican censure was not true, officials at the Vatican commented:

> . . . the note published a few days ago, though neither official or semi-official, nevertheless mirrors the opinion of responsible Vatican officials . . . The Holy See cannot indifferently see its authority challenged in public polemics by attacks on persons representing the Vatican, especially when the assailant is a priest.[78]

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., July 19, 1936, p. 1.

[75] McCloy, p. 135.

[76] The New York Times, September 27, 1936, p. 28.

[77] Ibid., September 10, 1936, p. 5.

[78] Ibid.

In all probability Coughlin's prompt resignation from political activities and the end of his broadcasting was the result of pressures from high ecclesiastical officials. In 1936, the La Corrispondenza news agency in Rome reported that Bishop Gallagher had received explicit instructions from the Vatican to put a stop to Coughlin's political speeches.[79] Further, the Vatican advised that Coughlin should "renounce the forming of political parties and confine himself to a precise illustration of the social doctrines of the Church.[80] Coughlin himself said in his farewell radio talk:

> . . . the responsibility of removing the causes which are creating communism in America now rests especially upon the shoulders of my clerical critics both high and low. The Church shall not be divided against herself.[81]

Coughlin was never again to enter politics. However, he did return to the radio early in 1937. But when he began his 1937 fall series of "The Golden Hour" broadcast he found himself subject to censorship from Archbishop Edward Mooney of Detroit who had succeeded Bishop Gallagher on the latter's death.[82] Until the beginning of World War II Coughlin continued to sporadically give radio talks and to publish Social Justice. Having long since broken with the New Deal,

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[79]"Vatican Voices," Time, XXVIII, (September 14, 1936), p. 63.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Social Justice, November 16, 1936.

[82]The New York Times, October 17, 1937, IV, p. 7.

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he progressively broke with other liberal and leftist groups until by 1940 he had nowhere to go but into the fascist camp. In the December 7, 1936 issue of Social Justice a hint of what was to come was revealed in an article on Adolph Hitler. In part the author said:

> But what I admire in Hitler is his stand against communism! SOCIAL JUSTICE, Father Coughlin's powerful organ of public opinion, certainly will agree that Hitler is today the European champion, the bitterest foe of communism . . . .

Accompanying the article was a picture of the dictator with the caption: "A puritan in his personal life . . . ."

Dr. Townsend emerged from the 1936 campaign a weakened political figure. At a caucus of Townsend Congressmen at the beginning of the new session of Congress only twenty men were present. In the Midwest and Northwest scores of clubs, embracing thousands of original Townsendites, seceded and formed a Pension Annuities League.[83] In spite of this and other secessions, Dr. Townsend rapidly regained lost ground. In 1938 he had become a sufficiently important political figure to be worthy of a Presidential pardon in connection with his conviction for contempt of Congress during the Bell committee hearings.[84] In fact, in the years 1937-1939 the Townsend Movement reached its optimum strength. By modifying its Plan so as to achieve maximum Congressional support and by playing upon Democratic-Republican

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[83] Ibid., January 24, 1937, IV, p. 6.

[84] Ibid., April 19, 1938, p. 1.

rivalry, it succeeded in elevating the Townsend Plan to a significant degree of political importance. In subsequent years, however, the movement gradually lost its influence.[85]

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[85]Holtzman, p. 136.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW DEAL REACTION

The Union Party effort in 1936 was the ultimate test of the strength of the mass movements of the left. In this test they failed. Perhaps the Party would have made a more significant showing had Huey Long still been alive to act as a standard-bearer for the joint political action. Certainly the lack of real Share Our Wealth participation in the campaign greatly reduced the chances for the radical party to succeed. However, the fact remains that the Party did not win a single contest in the election.

The Union Party attempt was the only occasion since 1924 that a third party in the Populist tradition had tried to win public recognition. The abortive attempt appeared to prove that the call of Populism (at least in this modified form) was no longer magical as it had been at the turn of the century. Yet these three agitators were not without influence for, with the help of their followings, they put pressure on the New Deal to take a decided swing to the left before the 1936 election.

But the influence of these three demagogues must not be overemphasized, for there were many pressures which compelled the President to move suddenly to the left. Symptomatic of them were the energetic demands by John L. Lewis for reform in the labor movement, the

complaints of business leaders like Al Smith, and the third party attempt by the American Commonwealth Political Federation--an organization made up of both Farmer-Laborites and intellectuals. But most important, the undisputable fact remained that even in 1935 and 1936 millions of Americans were still looking vainly for jobs and that the morale of business had yet to be restored.

The best evidence of the sudden leftward shift by the New Deal lay in its legislative record. A distinction is often justly made between the first New Deal of 1933-1934 and the second New Deal of 1935-1936. The first New Deal was characterized by the passage of emergency legislation designed (1) to give relief to the oppressed, (2) to correct long-standing ills in the financial structure of the nation, and (3) to provide short-term federal assistance for economic rejuvenation. In the category of relief was the creation of the Public Works Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps program, the Civil Works Administration, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The crash of 1929 had dramatized the imperfections of the financial edifice of the country, and the Banking Act of 1933 and the so-called "truth-in-securities" bill of 1934 dealt with the apparent defects in the financial structure by providing for supervision of finance and control of investment. Short-term federal assistance for economic revival took many forms. At one extreme was the Economy Bill, which reduced unnecessary government expenditures, and at the other extreme was the Agricultural Adjustment Act which authorized paying farmers to reduce their production. In

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between were various federal credit agencies which refinanced indebtedness of many kinds. New departures were the National Industrial Recovery Act, a bill intended to stimulate industrial activity through the waiving of antitrust laws, and the Tennessee Valley Authority which made the federal government a competitor with private industry in the public power field.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act and the Tennessee Valley Authority represented legislative actions of more than a temporary nature. In this respect they were precursors of the second New Deal of 1935-1936, characterized by reform legislation committing the federal government to permanent participation in the economy and welfare of the nation. Thus, the second New Deal rejected the free enterprise way of life of the twenties and replaced it with the doctrine of governmental intervention leading to the goal of security for all.

The Works Progress Administration bill was one example of the change in attitude in the Administration. Instead of accepting public relief as the limit to which the government must go in providing security, the Administration supplemented this with government employment. True the wages paid the employees were lower than those paid by private industry, but they were also higher than relief doles.

The WPA bill was passed in April 1935. With this exception the New Deal, in this session of Congress, at first appeared to be marking time. No new legislation was passed which could be considered as doing more than simply reinforcing the policies of the first New

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The NRA bill was passed in April 1935. With this accession the New Deal, in this session of Congress, at first appears to be marking time. No new legislation was passed which could be compared as being more than simply reinforcing the policies of the first New

Deal. Yet, the Congressional session of 1935 was the same period in which the Administration was being subjected to extreme criticism and abuse. Coughlin had joined the isolationists in a successful campaign against the adoption of the World Court protocols, Townsend had appeared before the House Ways and Means Committee to present his Plan for old-age pensions, and Huey Long was filibustering major White House Bills. In addition there were new opponents appearing on the right--among them the American Liberty League. Also the Supreme Court was to seize an opportunity at this time to indicate its disapproval of the New Deal by declaring the National Industrial Recovery Act unconstitutional.

Faced with rising dissatisfaction from many quarters the President called a conference of liberals from the Senate and from his Administration advisers to discuss the general political situation. The members present included, among others, Senators Norris, La Follette, and Wheeler and Administration advisers Felix Frankfurter and Henry Wallace. The group concluded that the best answer to criticism would be a more aggressive leadership. La Follette in particular cited the need to counter the appeals of Long and Coughlin.[1]

In June the President was ready to take the initiative away from his critics. In a bold move he suddenly announced that he was submitting a bill to Congress to revise the tax laws. The purpose was to shift the tax burden onto the shoulders of the wealthy. The

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[1]Idem, p. 303.

income tax rates were raised one per cent for an income of $50,000, six per cent for an income of $100,000, and sixteen per cent for an income of $3,500,000. Inheritance taxes and gift taxes were also increased, though less drastically, by about seven per cent on the very largest fortunes.[2] Will Rogers, the humorist, perhaps best expressed the amazement of the country when he commented: "I would sure liked to have seen Huey's face when he was waked up in the middle of the night by the President, who said, 'Move over, Huey, I want to get in with you.' "[3] Indeed, to many persons, it looked as if the President had decided it was time to accept in principle the share the wealth philosophy which a large number of Americans at the time had been converted to.

When the President forced through the Revenue Act of 1935 it opened the way for the passage of other reform legislation. The Social Security Act was the most important bill of any piece of legislation to be enacted in the second New Deal. It provided not only for old-age insurance but for unemployment insurance and for assistance to the states in other welfare activities. Likewise in August the Public Utilities Holding Company Act was approved. This bill made it illegal for more than two levels of holding companies to exist above the operating company. In July, liberal Senators also secured

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[2]Dexter Perkins, The New Age of Roosevelt, 1932-45 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 34.

[3]Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., Part 9, p. 9907.

the passage of the National Labor Relations Act. The President had played only a subordinate part in drawing up this pro-organized labor bill, but when the Supreme Court ruled against the N. I. R. A., he threw his support to it. The 1936 session of Congress continued only modestly the enactment of reform legislation, an undistributed profits tax on corporation revenues being the only significant bill in this category.

A comparison of the President's campaign speeches in 1932 and 1936 indicates further the dramatic move to the left that the Administration made in 1935. In 1932 Roosevelt looked on himself as a national leader above parties and classes. In his Commonwealth Club speech he said:

> Government includes the art of formulating a policy, and using the political technique to attain so much of that policy as will receive general support; persuading, leading, sacrificing, teaching always, because the greatest duty of a statesman is to educate. But in the matters of which I have spoken, we are learning rapidly, in a severe school . . . . We must build toward the time when a major depression cannot occur again; and if this means sacrificing the easy profits of inflationist booms, then let them go; and good riddance . . . .[4]

In contrast, in his Annual Message to Congress in 1936, which set the tone for his campaign of that year, Roosevelt revealed that he no longer looked on the government as a paternalistic master. In his instructions to his speech writer, Raymond Moley, the President said he wanted a "fighting speech." Moley understood Roosevelt did not

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[4]Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. I: The Genesis of the New Deal (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 756.

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intend anything sweeping in the way of new legislation but that F. D. R. was concerned about keeping his left-wing supporters satisfied.[5] In the message the President minced no words as to where the social enemy was located:

> But the challenge faced by this Congress is more menacing than merely a return to the past--bad as that would be. Our resplendent economic autocracy does not want to return to that individualism of which they prate, even though the advantages under that system went to the ruthless and the strong. They realize that in thirty-four months we have built up new instruments of public power. In the hands of a people's Government this power is wholesome and proper. But in the hands of political puppets of an economic autocracy such power would provide shackles for the liberties of the people. Give them their way and they will take the course of every autocracy of the past--power for themselves, enslavement for the public.[6]

Moley left the Administration under pressure. Writing as a critic, he began his censure by stating that the Administration had made a conscious effort in 1935 to undermine attacks from the demagogues on the left by adopting their program. Roosevelt, he said, had actually used the phrase "steal Long's thunder" in conversation with him.[7] Then Moley added that he believed that in the end the New Deal had been conquered by Long, for most of the New Deal legislation after June 1935 was a copy of legislation which had been earlier perfected in Louisiana. Said Moley, "Roosevelt, Wallace, Hopkins and others had become Kingfish disciples to a degree that they probably

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[5]Moley, P. 310.

[6]Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Public Papers . . . , Vol. V, p. 16.

[7]Moley, p. 305.

instead anything sweeping in the way of new legislation out than F. D. R. was concerned about keeping his Jackson-Jefferson supporters satisfied.[5] In the message the President showed no doubt as to where the social survey was located:

> But the challenge faced by this Congress is more exacting than merely a return to the past--and no time would be. Our regulated economic machinery does not seek to return to that individualism of which they speak, even though its advantages under that system went to the ruthless and the strong. They realize that in twenty-five months we have built up new instruments of public power. In the hands of a people's Government this power is wholesome and proper. But in the hands of political puppets of an economic autocracy such power would provide sinecures for the lieutenants of the people. Give them their way and they will take the reins of every autocracy of the past--power for themselves, malevolent for the public.[6]

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[5]Roisy, p. 310.

[6]Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Public Papers . . . , Vol. 4, p. 14.

[7]Roisy, p. 305.

never realized."[8] The only thing that they added to Long's deliberate policy of redistribution of existing wealth, asserted Moley, was the rationalization that it was being done in the name of social justice and the law.[9]

Moley perhaps overstated his case, but he was probably closer to the truth than was Tugwell who envisioned Roosevelt as a leftist-oriented politician who skillfully employed the extremist demands of the left to win Congressional support for the Administration's more moderate program. Tugwell was probably right when he stated that it would not have been possible to enact the Social Security Act, the Revenue Act, or the other New Deal welfare measures without the assistance of the demagogues.[10] But Roosevelt, it would appear from this small study, was a practical politician rather than a political theorist, for it was not until after the many political pressures had become extreme that he inaugurated his welfare state program.

In the process of having taken the first step in committing the United States to the welfare state, Roosevelt did nothing more than to play the role of the "man of action" described by Eric Hoffer. In the instance of these three agitators he observed that their fanatical

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[8]Raymond Moley, Twenty-Seven Masters of Politics; in a Personal Perspective (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1949), p. 229.

[9]Ibid., p. 230.

[10]Tugwell, p. 350.

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[9]Ibid., p. 270.

[10]Tugwell, p. 350.

movements were challenging the status quo and he disarmed them in the easiest way possible--by absorbing some of their convictions into the ideology of the New Deal.[11]

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[11] *Supra*, p. 4.

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_____. My First Days in the White House. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraph Press, 1935.
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A very good study which presents an accurate estimate of the political role the left played in the depression.

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This is a critical account of the New Deal by a former member of the "brain trust."

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A very brief, but superior volume which has extracted the essence of the New Deal period.

Perkins, Frances. The Roosevelt I Knew. New York: The Viking Press, 1946.
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Tugwell, Rexford G. The Democratic Roosevelt; a Biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957.
Since the author was a member of the "brain trust" his work is an important contribution.

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A somewhat sensationally written volume, but one nonetheless written by an able reporter of the period.

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This is a strongly anti-Coughlin article, but better than the average article on the priest.

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A highly critical article of Coughlin published in a liberal Catholic publication.

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An excellent article which unravels much of the confusion in this busy session of Congress.

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Carter, Boddie. "Kingfish to Crucifix," The New Republic, LXXII (January 23, 1934).
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