LOVELY, SYLLUS EUGENE. Huey Long and Share-Our-Wealth Plan. (1971)
Directed by: Dr. Allen W. Trelease. Pp. 74

It was the purpose of this study to assess the sincerity and intentions of Senator Huey Long with regard to his Share-Our-Wealth program and to examine the feasibility of his plan.

An examination of Long's background prior to his years in the senate was made to determine whether the Share-Our-Wealth plan was a logical extension of the influences and activities of his early life. Long's activities while a member of the senate were examined to determine whether he made a reasonable effort to enact his plan into working legislation. To determine the feasibility of his plan, the Share-Our-Wealth program was examined from the standpoint of its effect upon the economy and its compatibility with American economic freedom.

It was concluded that Long genuinely believed in his Share-Our-Wealth plan, and that he fully intended to implement it by legislation. It was also concluded that his program was not entirely unrealistic. Some elements of it have already been applied in essence, and other parts may conceivably be adopted in the future.

HUEY LONG AND

SHARE-OUR-WEALTH

by

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INTRODUCTION

Huey Pierce Long, Jr., was one of the most controversial political leaders in the history of the United States. After a career which included the governorship of Louisiana, Long entered the United States Senate on January 25, 1932. He served as senator from Louisiana until his death on September 10, 1935, a victim of assassination. As a senator he consistently drew attention to the plight of the poor and advocated a program to limit fortunes and thereby redistribute wealth. By the time of Long's death in 1935, this program had grown into his Share-Our-Wealth movement, which rivaled the New Deal as a plan for economic recovery. It also made Long a potential rival of Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the Presidency.

Almost every aspect of Long's career has been a subject of controversy. He has been denounced as a potential dictator and described as a ". . . twisted psychological type . . . with a power fixation dating from boyhood."[1] Certainly the degree of political power which Long acquired in Louisiana alarmed many people, and when they saw his drive for the Presidency mounting, they naturally concluded that he posed a real threat to American democracy. Many have also questioned the feasibility of Long's Share-Our-Wealth plan and his

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[1]James Rorty, "Callie Long's Boy Huey," Forum and Century XCIV (August, 1935), p. 127.

sincerity in advocating it. Carleton Beals described the plan as "a turnip on the end of the stick," a plan which was "either demagogic hypocrisy or else economic ignorance."[1] Even the sympathetic observer, T. Harry Williams, once wrote "There is room to doubt that he [Long] meant ever to translate the formula into working legislation."[2]

There has been an over-reaction to some aspects of Long's career. He unquestionably held too much power in Louisiana, and understandably he was denounced for that. But he has been treated most unfairly in assessments of his sincerity with regard to the Share-Our-Wealth program and its feasibility. Professor Williams seems to have arrived at this conclusion in his recent biography of Long. Williams now holds that Long "probably did believe that the SOW was a workable formula," and since wealth was more difficult to redistribute than the Senator had thought at first, "He would probably have modified the plans, if he had become President, retaining and emphasizing the tax provisions."[3] Even these statements seem to betray some doubt as to whether Long was fully behind his Share-Our-Wealth program.

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[1]Carleton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1935), p. 312.

[2]In Introduction to Huey P. Long, Every Man a King (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), p. xxiv.

[3]T. Harry Williams, Huey Long (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 696.

The lack of a substantial body of Long papers[1] may always foster doubt as to the sincerity and intentions of Louisiana's controversial leader. A natural tendency to label as inferior those programs which were not adopted may also predispose many to view Long's proposals as unrealistic. Nevertheless, Long genuinely believed in his Share-Our-Wealth plan, and he fully intended to implement it by legislation. Furthermore, his program was not entirely unrealistic; some elements of it have already been applied in essence, and other parts may conceivably be adopted in the future.

What was the content of Long's Share-Our-Wealth program? From what did it develop? In what ways was it a realistic program? What evidence indicates that Long intended to enact it into working legislation? The purpose of this study is to suggest answers to these questions.

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[1]In personal correspondence with the present writer, T. Harry Williams indicated that as of July 2, 1969, no substantial body of Long papers existed. Subsequently, many papers were found at Louisiana State University. In a recent article concerning these papers, however, Dr. Williams revealed that "practically nothing" was found which deals with Long's senatorial years, and those described have no bearing on the questions considered in this study. See T. Harry Williams and John Milton Price, "The Huey P. Long Papers at Louisiana State University," Journal of Southern History, XXVI (May, 1970), pp. 256-261.

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CHAPTER I

THE HOSTILITY TO GREAT WEALTH

Any story of the development of Huey Long's ideas must take account of the traditions of Winn Parish, the parish in north central Louisiana where he was born. The Longs were not newcomers to the parish. Huey's grandparents, Mary and John M. Long, together with their children settled there in the community of Tunica in 1859.[1] His parents moved from Tunica to Winnfield, the parish seat, shortly before he was born on August 30, 1893.[2]

Winn Parish is in the Piney Woods section of Louisiana, an area which had never been suited to plantation agriculture.[3] During the 1800s, this kind of land had sold for fifty cents to six dollars per acre.[4] As a result, subsistence farmers and men of little capital had settled there. Although the area was poor, the people were proud, individualistic, and not prone to accept their lot without complaint.[5] Being outside the circle which dominated the eonomic and political

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[1] Forrest Davis, Huey Long: A Candid Biography (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1935), pp. 44-45.

[2] Huey P. Long, Every Man a King (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), p. 2.

[3] Roger Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), p. 9.

[4] Ibid., p. 10.

[5] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 22-24.

life of the South, they developed a definite hostility toward those within it.

The Civil War, the Populist revolt of the 1890's, and the Socialist movement of the early 1900's, all occasioned dissent and hostility by the citizens of Winn. In the earliest of these the small farmers of Winn did not rally to the support of a society based on plantation agriculture. The parish delegate to the Louisiana secession convention was one of only seven who voted against the ordinance of secession,[1] and according to one account, about half of the potential soldiers of the parish fled to the woods to escape service in the Confederate Army.[2] Winn did not withhold its support however, from the Populist movement. The parish is credited with being among the first to organize the Louisiana Peoples Party in the year 1890.[3] It subsequently became a strong center of Populist activity, furnishing one of the two Louisiana delegates at the party's national convention in 1891, the Peoples Party candiate for governor in 1892, and the only Populist at the state constitutional convention in 1898. The Peoples Party of Louisiana adopted essentially all of the national program, and pushed also for legal reforms designed to lessen the power of the "black parishes" and the appointive power of the governor; both of these, they felt, had

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[1] Roger Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, pp. 166-167.

[2] James Rorty, "Callie Long's Boy Huey," Forum and Century, XCIV (August, 1935), p. 126.

[3] Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana During the Nineties," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V (June, 1918), p. 5.

worked to the detriment of the "white" or hill parishes.[1] During the 1892 campaign, the attention of the voters was called to such issues as

> the baneful influence of monopolies, the hard lot of the common people, and the corrupt alliance . . . between those who usurped too great a share of the profits of the producers of wealth and professional politicians . . . which . . . had destroyed the usefulness of both the two great political parties.[2]

Apparently these issues appealed to the voters of Winn because the Populists won every election held in the parish until 1900.[3] This spirit of social protest, according to T. Harry Williams, carried over into a strong support for the Socialist Party which, in 1908, elected half of the parish officials in Winn and received thirty-six percent of Winn's popular vote in the presidential election of 1912.[4]

Some of the Longs had opposed the Civil War, but apparently no Long became a noticeable participant in either the Populist or the Socialist movements.[5] Nevertheless, evidence of the local hostility to great wealth can be seen in the words of Huey's father, who in 1935 justified Huey's efforts to redistribute the wealth:

> Didn't Abe Lincoln free the niggers and not give the planters a dime? Why shouldn't Huey take the money away from the rich and still leave 'em plenty? Abe Lincoln freed the niggers without price. Why shouldn't the white slaves be freed and their masters left all they can use? Maybe you're surprised to hear talk like that. Well, it was just such talk that my boy was raised under and that I was raised under.

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[1]*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7, 18. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[3]T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long*, p. 23.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 44. [5]*Ibid.*, pp. 23, 44-45.

> My father and my mother favored the Union. Why not? They didn't have slaves. They didn't even have decent land. The rich folks had all the good land and all the slaves--why, their women didn't even comb their own hair. They'd sooner speak to a nigger than to a poor white. They tried to pass a law saying that only them as owned land could vote. And, when the War came, the man that owned ten slaves didn't have to fight.
>
> There wants to be a revolution, I tell you. I seen this domination of capital, seen it for seventy years. What do these rich folks care about the poor man? They care nothing--not for his pain, his sickness, nor his death.[1]

Any hostility so deeply rooted as this would undoubtedly be absorbed by the young members of a family. Besides making the youngsters sympathetic toward the poor, it would likely make them greatly receptive to economic and political issues of an egalitarian cast. This seems to have been the case with Huey Long. Seemingly genuine sympathy for the poor is expressed in his later story of witnessing as a child the spectacle of a farmer publicly pleading with people not to bid on his farm, which was being auctioned off for a debt.[2] In 1914, while a law student at Tulane, Long became greatly concerned with an issue which lay at the heart of the Progressive movement--the concentration of wealth in the United States. By his own account, he was impressed by an instructor's demonstration of the way in which the Louisiana inheritance law discouraged the concentration of fortunes by requiring that estates be divided equally among the heirs. He subsequently wrote to Representative John T. Watkins of Louisiana suggesting that Watkins introduce in Congress a proposal

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[1]James Rorty, "Callie Long's Boy Huey," p. 78.

[2]Huey P. Long, Every Man a King, pp. 3-4.

to make the Louisiana law uniform throughout the United States.[1]

In 1918 Huey's friend, State Senator S. J. Harper of Winn Parish, called publicly for the financing of World War I through the conscription of war profits and swollen fortunes. Harper argued that two percent of the people owned seventy percent of the nation's wealth and that the country faced financial slavery unless the war profiteers were made to bear a just share of the costs of the war.[2] When Harper was brought to trial under the Espionage Act for expressing these ideas, Long, who had by then become a lawyer, took the case and successfully defended him in court. In addition, Long wrote a letter to the New Orleans Item and other papers expressing concern for the growing concentration of wealth, pointing out as Harper had that about two percent of the people owned sixty-five or seventy percent of the wealth. He said that this condition was stifling educational opportunity throughout the country.[3] While Harper's influence on Long's career was probably not great,[4] the case gave Long an opportunity to react to the issue of concentrated wealth in a significant way.

Long also entered politics in 1918. He ran for a seat on the State Railway Commission, and after campaigning on an anticorporation platform, won the election. The Railway Commission later became the Public Service Commission with expanded power to regulate public utilities in the state. Long

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[1] Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, p. 9910, June 22, 1935.

[2] Huey P. Long, Every Man a King, p. 34. [3] Ibid., pp. 37-39.

[4] See T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, p. 113.

apparently found his position to be a stimulating one. Working through the three-man commission, he was instrumental in forcing a reduction in telephone rates, the Southwestern Gas and Electric Company rates, the rates charged by Shreveport's streetcars, and those of intrastate railroads. In addition, he was influential in having the legislature enact a three percent severance tax on petroleum drawn from Louisiana oil wells.[1] He was also successful in getting the oil pipelines belonging to the Standard Oil Company declared "common carriers," a move which aided the independent oil men who no longer had to sell to Standard at whatever prices they demanded in order to use the pipelines. Long's effort in this last case may have been partially inspired by a personal loss of money invested in independent oil companies which had virtually been ruined by the competition of Standard Oil. Nevertheless, this effort was perfectly in keeping with his by now established views on business and the public interest.

In various political campaigns, Long seemed to offer his support to the most progressive candidate. In 1920 he campaigned for John M. Parker, the successful Democratic nominee for governor, who had been the Progressive Party candidate in 1916. Long later broke with Parker over the oil pipeline controversy, however, and ran for governor himself in 1924. He advocated a road construction program, free textbooks for school children, and improved state services. He denounced concentrated wealth and corporate influence on government, and he promised to make corporations pay their fair share of

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[1] Allan Sindler, Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 46-48.

taxes.[1] Long was defeated on this first try for the office, but was elected when he ran again in 1928 on essentially the same platform.[2]

The new Governor Long was described by one historian as, "young and extremely progressive."[3] He immediately began to fulfill his campaign promises by obtaining legislation providing for paved roads and free textbooks.[4] He later increased the severance tax on such natural resources as oil and timber, and otherwise shifted the burden of taxes to the corporations. These, together with bond issues, financed the huge programs without placing additional taxes on the common man. Long heeded his campaign promises so closely that on April 16, 1930, he could safely challenge the voters to write down any promise which he had not kept and mail it to him.[5]

Governor Long was not able to carry out his program without difficulty, however. Efforts were made to impeach him in 1929, and his plans to complete his road-building program met effective opposition in the legislature shortly thereafter.[6] The legislature refused to sanction by the necessary

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[1] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, pp. 199, 206.

[2] Ibid., pp. 262-263.

[3] Garnie McGinty, A History of Louisiana (New York: The Exposition Press, 1949), p. 255.

[4] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, pp. 280-311.

[5] George N. French, "School Children Strew His Path With Rosebuds," The Louisiana Progress, April 17, 1930, p. 1, 1.

[6] New York Times, July 17, 1930, p. 2, 2.

two-thirds vote a constitutional amendment which would permit Long's proposal for financing the roads, a bond issue, to be decided by popular vote. In an attempt to arouse public opinion and force the legislature to submit, Long established a newspaper, The Louisiana Progress, conducted a speaking tour of the state, and finally ran for the United States Senate.

The first issue of the Louisiana Progress was published on March 27, 1930. It purported to tell "the full truth about Louisiana affairs," but it was, of course, openly in favor of all of Governor Long's political programs.[1] Its coverage of Long's tour of the state revealed that, in addition to the road issue, the governor consistently touched upon the evils of chain stores. While his purpose in doing this was to create support for proposals to tax the stores, the issue was largely unrelated to his main objective and appears to be mainly an expression of his continuing anticorporation sentiment. The first issue of the paper quoted Long's charge that the stores were guilty of short-weighing. He accused them of subservience to the "bloody barons of Wall Street," and of enslaving in turn the people of Louisiana. Long praised W. F. Henderson, the owner of a Shreveport radio station, for his campaign against the stores. In words curiously like those of his father in 1935, Long declared that Henderson was "doing this nation as good a piece of emancipation as Abe Lincoln did when he freed the slaves."[2] In subsequent speeches the governor urged independent

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[1]The Louisiana Progress, March 27, 1930, p. 1, 4-5.

[2]Ibid., p. 1, 8.

grocers to set lower prices in order to undersell the "chain robbers" and to put pressure on their senators and representatives for political relief.[1] He argued that the chain stores did nothing to help the community, and that they dispatched profits overnight to Wall Street, and drove the independent merchant out of business.[2]

On May 1, the Louisiana Progress declared that the chain store problem had become acute and that it required "more consideration on the part of the public than any others of an economic nature that has [sic] come up in the past decade."[3] However, another editorial on June 19 went beyond the chain store issue and indicted big business in general. It referred to a speech of Franklin Delano Roosevelt alleging that fifty or sixty big companies, each controlled by two or three men, did about eighty percent of the industrial business of the country. The editorial pointed out the folly of permitting this concentration of economic power, adding that "the depression is proof that as rulers of economic destiny, our billionaires are not always wise."[4]

In his tour of the state, Governor Long did not lose sight of the big issue--that of the roads. It seemed that he was making little headway in his efforts to win the legislature, however, and on April 16, 1930, he indicated

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[1] Ibid., May 1, 1930, p. 1, 3.

[2] George N. French, "School Children Strew His Path With Rosebuds," The Louisiana Progress, April 17, 1930, p. 1, 1.

[3] The Louisiana Progress, May 1, 1930, p. 4, 1-2.

[4] Ibid., June 19, 1930, p. 4, 1-2.

strongly that he would run for the senate, submitting both his road program and himself to the people for their approval.

By June, despite a hard fought campaign to force the legislature to submit the bond issue to the voters, it was obvious that Long could not get the necessary two-thirds vote. In a statement to the people he admitted his defeat but indicated that he could accomplish the same results by having the legislature call a constitutional convention for the road question only--a move which would require only a majority of the legislators. He then urged the people to write their state senators and representatives and ask support for such a move.[2] The edition of the Louisiana Progress which carried this statement also featured a cartoon picturing Louisiana's Senator Joseph E. Ransdall, a Long opponent, as wondering how long he would stay in the United States Senate. If this was a threat to those who opposed the governor's road program, it seemed to have little effect. A few members of the state senate were able by filibustering to prevent a vote on Long's call for a constitutional convention. Long then announced, on July 16, his candidacy for the United States Senate. In announcing his candidacy, he stressed the significance of the road issue:

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[1]George N. French, "School Children Strew His Path With Rosebuds," p. 1, 1.

[2]The Louisiana Progress, June 26, 1930, p. 1, 7-8.

> In effect my election will mean that the Legislature will submit my plan to the people, or those who refuse to accede to the publicly expressed stand of the voters will be signing their own political death warrant in the approaching election.[1]

The chain store issue was also ventilated during the campaign. On August 14 Long's paper accused the chain store kings of opposing him out of fear that as a United States Senator he would begin to curb their unethical practices.[2] Later, taking note of suggestions that he ought to base his campaign more on national issues, Long enumerated the four main subjects before Congress as labor, farm relief, foreign affairs, and flood control. But unable to suppress his suspicion of wealth, he saw the evil influence of big business behind United States military interventions in Latin America. He criticized Senator Ransdall's position on all of these issues and expressed his intention to more truly represent the wishes of the people. At the same time Long made it unmistakably clear that he would serve out his term as governor, leaving the senate seat vacant for awhile.[3]

The primary election was held on September 9, 1930. Long was triumphant, carrying fifty-one of sixty-four parishes. He had accurately gauged the significance of the election to the road issue, because he was able to obtain the legislature's approval of his road program before the month was out.[4]

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[1]Ibid., July 17, 1930, p. 1, 1-2.

[2]Ibid., August 14, 1930, p. 1, 2.

[3]Ibid., August 28, 1930, p. 19, 1-5.

[4]Ibid., September 25, 1930, p. 1, 7-8.

Long's victory in the primary assured his election in November.[1] Although he did not need a campaign issue, the passage of his road program left a void which he could fill with any issue he wished to advocate. He returned to the question which had previously been of central concern--the concentration of wealth.

In October, Long declared that the greatest obstacle to American prosperity was the unjust way in which wealth had become distributed. He used Harper's figures again to charge that "seventy percent of the wealth is in the hands of less than two percent of the people."[2] He looked forward, he said, to going to the senate and there solving "the economic problem that is nationwide and worldwide."[3]

After the November election the Louisiana Progress was published on a monthly basis, and in December Long contributed the first of a series of articles which blamed the depression on the concentration of wealth. He even tried to show that the Bible condemned it. In an article in June 1931, Long referred to a Saturday Evening Post article of 1916, entitled "Are We Rich or Poor," which alleged that the United States was "a bloated plutocracy comprising less than one percent lording it over a starveling horde with only a thin margin of merely well-to-do in between."[4] He also quoted from the report of

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[1] Long was, in fact, unopposed in the November election.

[2] The Louisiana Progress, October 23, 1930, p. 1, 2.

[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., June 1931, p. 1, 2-4.

the 1916 Industrial Relations Commission which indicated that two percent of the people owned sixty-five percent of the wealth. Long asked, "What does a man need with a hundred million dollars . . . ?" The country had plenty of everything, he said, but the people could not purchase what they needed because so much was possessed by so few. "If the wealth . . . were reasonably distributed into the hands of a large number of people, then there would be consumption to keep up with the production."[1]

In none of Long's articles had he proposed any specific remedy. In August, 1931, he advised people to barter with their neighbors for needed items. He cautioned them to keep a good garden and reminded them of the nutritional value of pot likker. He asked them to be liberal with their neighbors and not to forget the Negroes.

By the time Long was elected to the senate, two factors had emerged which would have a bearing upon any assessment of his future career. First, he had acquired an inherent hostility to wealth and an economic philosophy which seemed to revolve around the belief that wealth was becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. This would help explain his view of the cause of the depression and his future program for economic recovery. Second, Long had established a good record for fulfilling campaign promises while governor of Louisiana. This would seem to justify a measure of confidence in any future pledges which he might make as a national political leader.

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[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*, August, 1931, p. 1, 2-3.

CHAPTER II

THE ATTACK UPON CONCENTRATED WEALTH

Huey Long took office as United States Senator on January 25, 1932. The depression was deepening, and many people were searching for solutions to the economic calamity which had hit the country. The Louisiana Progress suspended publication after the January 1932 issue, but it had revealed through its articles and coverage of Long's activities that the new senator would take some kind of action against concentrated wealth and perhaps would make some proposal for its redistribution. This seemed even more likely on March 4 when Long predicted in an interview that the great political fight in the country would come over the inheritance tax, that being the only way to reduce the concentration of wealth.[1] On March 18 he repeated on the senate floor his view that the economic condition of the country was caused by a handful of men owning all the wealth. With an eye to the 1932 revenue bill then under consideration in the House, he told senators that the concentration of wealth and such possible remedies as steeper inheritance and income taxes would soon come before the senate. He wanted these issues decided from the standpoint of the common man's interest, not that of the vested interests.[2]

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[1] New York Times, March 4, 1932, p. 21, 5.

[2] Congressional Record, 72nd Congress, 1st Session, LXXXV, p. 6452.

On March 21 Long returned to the matter of concentrated wealth in his longest senate speech to date. He quoted statistics to show that wealth had become twice as concentrated since 1916. This, he said, had changed the country into a commercial chain enterprise which was driving independent businesses out of existence at the rate of 435 per day since 1927. He called for balancing the budget through high inheritance taxes, high tax rates on the larger incomes, and taxes upon such trusts as Standard Oil.[1] This speech seemed to have been advertised in advance. The galleries were filled, and about seventy-five members of the house of representatives had come to listen.[2] That Long had spoken to an appreciative audience was evident from the "prolonged applause" which he received from the gallery at the end of his speech.[3]

Obviously encouraged by the reception of these remarks, Long intensified his attack on concentrated wealth and presented further evidence for his case. In an address on April 4 he charged that a determined effort was being made to prevent the 1932 tax bill

> from going into the field of surtaxes and inheritance taxes, that would give the common man of the country a chance, and give the wealth of this country an opportunity to be distributed among the people of the United States.[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 6541-6544.

[2] New York Times, March 22, 1932, p. 2, 2.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Congressional Record, 72nd Congress, 1st Session, LXXV, p. 7372.

He charged that such men as Rockefeller, Morgan, and Baruch were behind these efforts. As further proof of the concentration of wealth, Long presented statistics which showed that in 1929, 540 "supermillionaires" had an aggregate net income large enough to purchase the entire wheat and cotton crops of 1930, and that the largest income tax payers earned enough to pay the wages of the workers in the entire clothing industry with 100 million dollars left over. He warned that there must be relief from such an anomaly, or 1932 would, in retrospect, look like a prosperous year.[1]

As yet, Long had not proposed any specific bill to correct the concentration of wealth, but had been content with presenting his case in general terms. On April 21, while the tax bill was before the Senate Finance Committee, he introduced a resolution which asked the senate to instruct the Finance Committee to amend the revenue bill

> so that no person shall have an annual income in excess of \$1,000,000, and so that no person during his or her lifetime shall receive gifts, inheritances, or other bequests more than \$5,000,000.[2]

With this resolution Long made a specific proposal to help prevent the further concentration of wealth, but it contained no method for immediate redistribution. Long presumably felt that government spending of the additional revenue on social welfare programs would partially effect that.

The idea of a limit on incomes was not entirely new to the senate. On January 25, 1932, Long's first day there, three measures were presented with a

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[1]Ibid., pp. 7372-7377. [2]Ibid., p. 8556.

purpose of placing some limitation upon the maximum salary which could be paid by any business enterprise receiving a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. An additional proposal was designed to prevent such an enterprise from reducing the pay of employees whose salaries were less than $2,000 per year. Although all were defeated, the record shows that Long voted for those on which a roll-call vote was taken.[1]

On April 29 the senate, by voice vote, refused to consider Long's resolution to limit incomes and bequests.[2] According to Long himself, he received the support of only half a dozen senators.[3]

When the revenue bill came before the senate in May, Long made no further effort to push his resolution. He took a vigorous part in the debate, however, urging especially the increased taxation of higher incomes.

The existing law imposed a maximum surtax rate of twenty percent on amounts over $1,000,000.[4] The bill passed by the house proposed to increase this maximum to forty percent, and the Senate Finance Committee reported the bill with further increases, proposing to take forty-five percent of amounts over $100,000.[5] When the bill reached the floor Senator Couzens of Michigan

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[1]Ibid., pp. 2632-2645. [2]Ibid., p. 9202.

[3]Letter from Huey Pierce Long to Certain Constituents, June 22, 1933. Huey Pierce Long Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; Huey P. Long, Every Man a King, p. 30.

[4]New York Times, June 3, 1932, p. 1, 8.

[5]Congressional Record, 72nd Congress, 1st Session, LXXV, pp. 10085-10086.

submitted an amendment increasing the surtax rates still further to a maximum of sixty-five percent on incomes in excess of $1,000,000.[1] Long supported this proposal, although he also supported an amendment of Senator Trammell of Florida to reduce the Couzens rates on the first $4,000 of income, leaving the higher rates unchanged.[2] The latter amendment received only four votes, and the Couzens proposal was defeated 49 to 31.[3]

Senator Connally of Texas then offered an amendment fixing all income tax rates at levels slightly below those of the Couzens amendment and leaving the maximum surtax rate at fifty-five percent of the excess of $1,000,000.[4] This was still above the committee recommendation. Long was determined to get this much, and when it appeared that the Connally amendment too was headed for defeat, he began a filibuster which forced a delay on the vote until the following day. During the filibuster he declared that neither the Couzens nor Connally amendments would really bring an end to bloated fortunes. But that goal, he said, must be approached through the tax system. He also expressed opposition to certain other features of the committee's bill which placed taxes on movies, automobiles, radios, matches, candy, and other "luxuries." Long regarded it as "almost a crime" to institute such taxes in order to avoid taxing a man making $1,000,000 clear or even $5,000 clear. He denied that it was a luxury for "a poor man to go to a show, listen to a radio, or ride in a Ford

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[1] Ibid., pp. 10108-10109. [2] Ibid., p. 10273.

[3] Ibid., pp. 10275-10276. [4] Ibid., pp. 10277-10278.

car."[1] Despite Long's efforts, however, the Connally amendment was defeated 46 to 31.[2]

Objection to both the Couzens and Connally amendments had been voiced partially on the ground that the proposed rates raised taxes too much on lower incomes. This objection had been a factor in motivating the Trammell amendment, yet according to Long, it was defeated with the help of some senators who had proposed this argument. Long pointed out this inconsistency and denied that the increased rates on such incomes as $5, 000 were a valid reason for opposing the Couzens or Connally amendments. He asserted that ninety-five percent of the people would be glad to place themselves in the $5, 000 income group despite the increases. In a final effort, Long submitted an amendment which accepted the relatively low rates proposed by the Finance Committee on incomes below $10, 000, but adopted the Couzens rates from there up.[3] Long again attacked concentrated wealth and quoted passages from William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, Lord Bacon, and the Bible in support of his position. His amendment was defeated, however, by a vote of 49 to 24.[4]

Due to a visit to Louisiana, Long missed a reconsideration of the Connally amendment which passed the senate on May 31. He was paired in favor of the measure, however. Long's efforts to decentralize the wealth

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[1]Ibid., pp. 10200-10301. [2]Ibid., p. 10389.

[3]Ibid., p. 10391. [4]Ibid., p. 10400.

through what he would have considered a satisfactory restructuring of the tax system had failed. Only a tiny minority of senators were prepared to go as far as he in this direction.

Throughout May, Long continued his attack upon concentrated wealth by injecting the subject into whatever discussion was being held on the floor of the senate. Among those whom he quoted to support his stand was Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

> We may build factories, but the fact remains that we have enough now to supply all our domestic needs and more, if they are used. No, our basic trouble was an insufficiency of capital, it was an insufficient distribution of buying power coupled with an oversufficient speculation in production.[1]

Thus Long ascribed to Roosevelt the view that the concentration of wealth had caused the depression by depriving people of money with which to buy.

By June 1932, Long had attracted national attention through the relentless pursuit of his economic proposals. He was asked to become the presidential candidate on the Farmer-Labor ticket but refused the offer.[2] Instead, he arrived in Chicago on June 21 to lead the Louisiana delegation for Roosevelt at the Democratic National Convention.[3] He worked hard for Roosevelt and, by influencing the Mississippi delegation to hold firm at one point, helped prevent a break in the Roosevelt forces which could have cost the New York governor the

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[1]Ibid., p. 10873.

[2]New York Times, June 18, 1932, p. 1, 2.

[3]New York Times, June 22, 1932, p. 8, 6.

nomination.[1]

After the adjournment of Congress on July 16, 1932, Long campaigned in Arkansas and Louisiana on behalf of senatorial candidates who professed support for his program. He first invaded Arkansas on behalf of Senator Hattie Caraway, who was running for re-election in the August 9 primary against reportedly strong opposition.

Long's campaign on behalf of Mrs. Caraway was motivated by a variety of factors--a growing feud with Senator Robinson, her Arkansas colleague and a factional rival, the desire to keep Mrs. Caraway, a Long supporter, in the senate, and the fact that the situation presented Long an opportunity to demonstrate his national appeal. The feud with Senator Robinson arose from the latter's refusal to support Long's resolution to limit incomes and inheritances. The same day that Robinson had helped defeat the resolution, Long retaliated with a vicious speech insinuating that Robinson and other party leaders were under the influence of Wall Street bankers. Long had declared on that occasion that he would vote a Farmer-Labor ticket or even Republican in November if either of those parties advocated a reduction of swollen fortunes in preference to a Democratic ticket advocating the ideas of Robinson and Bernard Baruch. At the same time, in a spectacular display of political independence, Long resigned from all senate committees to which he had been assigned by Robinson. He indicated that, while he did not want a test of strength with Robinson over the

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[1]William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 7.

matter of senate leadership, he might be led to go before the people themselves for a test of strength on the question of the concentration of wealth; this, he said, might occur in Louisiana, in Arkansas, or elsewhere.[1]

Long's intention of testing the strength of his program in Senator Robinson's home state was indicated in July 1932, just prior to the adjournment of Congress. On the senate floor Long read a statement by Mrs. Caraway explaining that it was necessary for her to be home campaigning. Long praised her voting record in the senate, especially her stand relative to swollen fortunes, and called upon senators to join him in support of her re-election.[2] The following month, Long began a speaking campaign in Arkansas on her behalf. His tour opened on the theme of redistributing wealth, and Long assured the people that they could depend upon Mrs. Caraway to vote for the rights of the common man.[3] Mrs. Caraway won a landslide victory,[4] and many observers attributed her success to Long's efforts on her behalf.[5]

After the campaign in Arkansas, Long returned to Louisiana and campaigned for John H. Overton, one of his lieutenants, who was running against Senator Edwin Broussard, Long's colleague, who was not part of the Long group.

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[1] Congressional Record, 72nd Congress, 1st Session, LXXV, pp. 9212-9219.

[2] Ibid., pp. 15191-15192.

[3] New York Times, August 2, 1932, p. 6, 6.

[4] Ibid., August 11, 1932, p. 4, 6.

[5] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, p. 592.

He dwelt on the same issue as before, stressing "his plan to outlaw incomes over a million a year."[1] Overton too was nominated and elected.

The lame-duck session of the 72nd Congress opened on December 5, 1932. Despite the political strength which Long had demonstrated in the recent elections, he made no serious effort in that session to secure passage of his program to limit incomes and inheritances. He did try, however, to popularize the program with an eye to future legislation. On the second day of the session, he declared that the most noticed issue of the recent campaigns was that of concentrated wealth. He asserted that Roosevelt had been nominated and elected "on the one great fundamental, necessary principle of the decentralization of wealth in America."[2] This being so, he questioned whether the congressional leadership was in tune with the wishes of the people on that question. He then advocated a program of higher income and inheritance taxes, the regulation of working hours to prevent overproduction, government control of surplus crops, together with a balancing of farm production with consumption, and enough money in circulation to carry on the business of the country and create a rise in commodity prices. He asserted that conditions had grown worse and that wealth had concentrated until the top structure had nothing below upon which it could rest. Therefore, he deemed it necessary to organize for action,

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[1] New York Times, September 11, 1932, p. 6, 1.

[2] Congressional Record, 72nd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVI, p. 56.

decentralize the wealth of the nation and diffuse it among the people.[1] Long also, on December 7, attended the Democratic caucus, and according to Senator Robinson of Arkansas, urged it to endorse his proposals, arguing that the party platform already supported them.[2]

In January 1933, Long revealed what would become perhaps the most controversial ingredient of his economic program--the capital tax levy. He suggested during a filibuster against the Glass banking bill that he would solve the farmers' economic problems by raising a ten billion dollar fund for public works and employment until a balance of farm production and consumption would permit their resumption of farming. The fund was to be raised from taxes on huge incomes and inheritances, and if necessary by a small capital levy--a graduated tax on the amount of wealth a person owned.[3] This capital levy tax was a new addition to Long's program, which heretofore had dealt only with incomes and inheritances.

On March 4, 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the new chief executive, and after a short special session of the senate, the first session of the Seventy-Third Congress opened on March 9, 1933. On the first day, amid efforts of the administration to deal with the national bank crisis, Long proposed a constitutional amendment to permit the taxation of capital without

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[1] Ibid., pp. 56-58.

[2] New York Times, December 9, 1932, p. 3, 6.

[3] Congressional Record, 72nd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVI, p. 1464.

apportionment among the states, in the same manner as the income tax.[1] This little-publicized proposal was intended to assure in advance the constitutionality of Long's capital levy proposal if it were enacted.

The next day, Long introduced two bills which he had prepared (and which Representative Montet of Louisiana introduced in the house of representatives simultaneously). The first proposed a capital tax for the purpose of promoting the common welfare and providing for the national defense. It would impose this tax annually upon the net capital of individuals according to a graduated scale, beginning with fortunes of $1, 000, 000. It amounted to one percent of net capital between $1, 000, 000 and $2, 000, 000, then continued upward until net capital of $1000, 000, 000 would be taxed $45, 450, 000, and all over $100, 000, 000 would be taken completely by the government. Net capital was defined as the total value of all property, real or personal, tangible or intangible, owned by an individual at the end of the year, less any outstanding indebtedness. In addition to the capital tax, the bill proposed to increase gift taxes to a maximum of one hundred percent of net gifts in excess of $100, 000, 000.[2]

Long's second bill was essentially a restatement of the old resolution to limit incomes and inheritances. It proposed an income tax schedule which increased rates sharply on the higher incomes to a maximum of one hundred percent on all income over $1, 000, 000. The bill would also increase estate

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[1] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 1st Session, LXXVII, p. 49.

[2] Ibid., pp. 124-125.

taxes to a maximum of ninety-five percent of estates over $35,000,000. In addition, individual beneficiaries would have to pay a tax of one hundred percent on inheritances over $5,000,000.[1]

With these bills Long provided a specific program to limit the concentration of wealth. His capital tax would, in the first year, abolish all fortunes of over $100,000,000 and reduce them further as the taxes were imposed in succeeding years. He now carried this program to the people.

On March 17, Long delivered a nation-wide radio address entitled "How America Can be Adjusted." He explained in simple terms that his bills would give the government all the money it needed without resort to additional taxes, and would prevent all the wealth from being concentrated in the hands of a few. He asserted that the true philosophy of government should be to do the greatest good for the greatest number. But

> We are not doing the greatest good to the greatest number when we let the few dominate us in government, finance, and industry and allow the great masses of the people to become the political serfs and industrial slaves of superlords of finance.[2]

Long quoted from his stock of statistics and statements of prominent individuals to support his stand against concentrated wealth. He also noted President Roosevelt's declaration that American economic life was dominated by some six hundred corporations, and that if concentration continued, at the end of another century America would be controlled by perhaps a dozen corporations run by only one hundred men. He said that Roosevelt had declared for redistribution of

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., pp. 786-787.

wealth, and that Americans must support him. Long ended, however, by asking support for his own bills before Congress.[1]

In May, 1933, no action having been taken on these measures, Long offered them as an amendment to a pending gasoline tax bill. He prepared for a patient and thorough presentation of his case. Large charts were hung on the senate walls, designed to show year by year the growing concentration of wealth in the United States since 1907. In his speech Long claimed that this concentration had made the crash of 1929 inevitable. He explained his amendment, adding that his limits on incomes, inheritances, and fortunes were probably too high, but he wanted them high enough to avoid crippling individual initiative.

Although Long's proposals would clearly have limited private fortunes, the ensuing debate demonstrated that he had no corresponding plan worked out to redistribute this wealth to the needy. He had ideas, however. In general terms he advocated the diffusion of this revenue by Congress "for roads, for schools, for farm relief, for hospitals, for rivers and harbors, for soldiers and sailors, for pensions, for every kind of activity." He felt that within fifteen years, about one-third of the nation's wealth would come back to the treasure for redistribution. Long used the word "drastic" with reference to his capital levy tax, but said that it was constitutional and was necessary because other measures to prevent the concentration of wealth had not been imposed in time. Further, he

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[1] Ibid., pp. 787-789.

asserted that the amendments were no more than what he had advocated in the presidential campaign "at the request of and with the knowledge and upon the advice and consent of the great man who now occupies the position of Chief Executive."[1] Long had indeed advocated these things while campaigning for the Democrats in 1932, and Roosevelt had, as Long previously pointed out, made public statements which indicated some opposition to concentrated economic power. It is likely also that, at the first meeting between Roosevelt and Long, Roosevelt had endorsed in general terms the principle of decentralizing wealth.[2] Nevertheless, Long's claim was an extremely liberal interpretation of the president's position, designed mainly to invoke the prestige of the president in support of his bill.

In debate on Long's proposal, Senator Nye of North Dakota suggested that Long might enlist greater support by eliminating the capital tax provision. Long accepted this suggestion, withdrew the capital tax feature, and left the amendment to apply only to incomes and inheritances.[3]

Despite this maneuver, Long's amendment was defeated by a vote of 50 to 14. Among his supporters--voting, paired, or announced--were Senators Norris of Nebraska, Wheeler of Montana, LaFollette of Wisconsin, Frazier of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 3319-3324.

[2] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, p. 602.

[3] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 1st Session, LXXVII, p. 3328.

North Dakota, and Mrs. Caraway of Arkansas.[1]

Despite his tactical maneuver on this occasion, Long did not drop his capital levy idea. In an interview in New York on May 14, Long reiterated his belief in its necessity. He also criticized President Roosevelt for failing to carry out campaign promises in its behalf.[2]

By the time Congress adjourned on June 16, 1933, a growing split was evident between Long and the president. The rift was caused partly by genuine differences of philosophy. Long's belief, for example, that concentration of wealth had caused the depression by depriving the masses of purchasing power logically prevented his supporting the administration's "Economy Bill" of March 1933, a measure designed to help balance the budget by reducing the compensation of veterans and the salaries of government employees. While Long argued against the bill merely by claiming that his own capital levy tax and other plans for raising money would balance the budget without reaching down into the pockets of the masses,[3] he obviously felt that the measure would make conditions worse by reducing purchasing power even below present levels. He therefore voted against the bill at a time when few senators dared vote

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[1] Ibid., pp. 3328-3329.

[2] New York Times, May p5, 1933, p. 2, 1.

[3] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 1st Session, LXXVII, pp. 275-276.

against economy in government.[1] Long's position on the National Industrial Recovery Act of June 1933, also shows this basic difference in philosophy. While approving that part of the bill which provided for public works, Long criticized the section which permitted industries to draw up codes of fair competition subject only to the approval of the president. He complained that the antitrust law would be effectively nullified, since anything prescribed by these codes was exempted from antitrust prosecution. Long claimed that the purpose of the antitrust laws had been to prevent the concentration of wealth, but that it had already been made ineffective by Supreme Court rulings and by the fact that those whom the law was supposed to regulate were entrusted with its enforcement. He particularly objected to the rulings of the Supreme Court which changed the antitrust law from its original position of prohibiting <u>any</u> restraint of trade to one which prohibited only "unreasonable" restraint of trade. Long recalled that he had, more than a year before, offered a bill to make every restraint of trade illegal. He now predicted dire consequences for the common man if the country were placed under a system of business codes drawn up by businessmen.[2] When the vote on the National Industrial Recovery bill was taken, Long at first voted against it, but upon completion of the roll-call, he reversed his position and voted for the bill.[3] He explained later, with reference to both the codes and the public works sections of the bill, that he had been torn

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[1]Long was one of thirteen who voted against the Economy Bill. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 417.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 5174-5182. [3]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 5424-5425.

"between voting for a bill that undid fundamental principles of democracy on the one hand and a promise of a job to the man unemployed on the other."[1]

While President Roosevelt's policies so far had prevailed over his own, Long was winning increased support in the senate for his plan to limit incomes and inheritances. Further, his campaigns in Arkansas and Louisiana had demonstrated the popular appeal of his program. These factors must have given him some hope that his proposals would ultimately be enacted. Further, they undoubtedly whetted his appetite for the presidency. While his desire for the office was not widely acknowledged at this time, it had existed from a much earlier date. Before entering politics he had revealed to his wife his ambition to be president and had listed the offices he would hold as steps toward fulfilling his ambition.[2] Now, with an appealing program, Long may have begun to feel that, if the depression continued, the presidency would be within his grasp, perhaps as early as 1936. He obviously had every reason to pursue his program relentlessly, and he continued to do so.

Back home during the interval between the first and second sessions of the 73rd Congress, Long revived his newspaper under the new name _The American Progress_. He also wrote and secured publication of his autobiography, and toured Louisiana on behalf of a new tax program for the state.

The first issue of the _American Progress_ appeared on August 24, 1933.

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 5602.

[2] T. Harry Williams, _Huey Long_, p. 107.

The paper was an obvious attempt to spread Long's ideas and generate support for his program. In the first of what were to be weekly articles submitted by the senator himself, Long stated that legislation passed to correct such things as unemployment and farm relief, or even to inflate the currency, would do no great good unless a limit was placed upon the size of individual fortunes in the United States and provision was made for redistributing the wealth and fruits of the land among all the people. He explained his proposals to limit fortunes, incomes, and inheritances:

> The whole cast of the program is that above a certain amount, the government takes the balance and distributes it to the rank and file of humanity through its guarantees, compensations, benefits, public works, etc., thereby keeping a balanced condition so that when the land has enough food, all are fed, and so that when the land has sufficient clothes, none are naked.[1]

An editorial in this first issue, entitled "Our Policies," blamed the present trouble on the concentration of wealth and announced, "Our fight will be directed against the establishment of an economic slavery for the masses of our people."[2] The paper also mildly attacked President Roosevelt. A front page cartoon depicted the president as attempting to redistribute a small pile of wealth while leaving the larger pile--that owned by a small percent of the people--untouched.

Long's autobiography, Every Man a King, was published in early October, 1933. The American Progress reported that he had spent the greater part of the last four months preparing the book. The paper described the

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[1] The American Progress, August 24, 1933, p. 1, 4-5.

[2] Ibid., p. 3, 1-2.

volume as Senator Long's story from his boyhood days in Winn, through his election to the United States Senate and his campaign there to make America a prosperous land in which every man will be a king. It hailed the book as an account of the "hard, relentless battle of one lone man" against the evils of corporate interests.[1] The book is indeed a well written account of Long's activities, and it bubbles over with the enthusiasm of a man who is going places. It is also an appeal to limit fortunes and redistribute wealth, specifically advocating the proposals for a capital levy tax and a limit on income and inheritances.[2]

In October Long toured Louisiana advocating his program for a redistribution of wealth at the national level and a state program of tax relief for the people of Louisiana. The most prominent feature of his tax scheme was a provision for the eventual exemption of homesteads of $2,000 or less from all property taxes.[3] Long placed his Louisiana program within the context of the national scene by declaring that unless his plan for decentralization of wealth was adopted, there was little hope for a national recovery. "If I knew that the redistribution of wealth was going to start tomorrow, I would not be advocating a tax relief program for Louisiana."[4]

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[1]Ibid., October 19, 1933, p. 1, 6.

[2]Huey P. Long, Every Man a King, p. 339.

[3]New York Times, November 10, 1933, p. 4, 3.

[4]Ibid., October 22, 1933, Section 1, p. 3, 5.

CHAPTER III

THE PLAN TO SHARE THE WEALTH

The Second Session of the 73rd Congress opened on January 3, 1934. In the American Progress Long announced that the concentration of wealth was still the greatest issue before Congress,[1] and he lost no time in raising it again in the senate. During this session he formulated his Share-Our-Wealth plan, a more comprehensive economic program which combined his basic scheme to limit incomes, inheritances, and fortunes with more refined and definite proposals to guarantee a redistribution of wealth.

On January 4, Long introduced a joint resolution to provide old-age pensions at the rate of thirty dollars per month to all persons over sixty years of age who had incomes of less than $1,000 per year or who possessed property less than $10,000 in value.[2] He also submitted a resolution to instruct the senate Finance Committee to reform all new revenue bills so that personal incomes would be limited to $1,000,000 per year, inheritances to a lifetime maximum of $5,000,000, and personal fortunes to $50,000,000; this last represented a considerable reduction of the limit which he had previously proposed. All amounts

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[1] The American Progress, January 4, 1934, p. 7, 2-5.

[2] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVIII, p. 58.

in excess of these figures were to be forfeit to the government.[1] In a speech on January 8, Long criticized the Roosevelt administration's efforts to cure the depression, claiming that the debt incurred by its recovery programs could not be discharged by future generations within the present tax structure without making conditions worse. He predicted that his own program would bring in fifteen billion dollars per year, enough to let the government do whatever was needed.[2]

Consideration of his resolutions was delayed by Long's involvement in Louisiana politics and his consequent absence from the senate between January 10 and January 30. The New Orleans municipal election was held on January 23, and Long had organized a slate of candidates to run against the incumbent Mayor Semmes Walmsley and other anti-Long men who controlled New Orleans. Long campaigned hard during January but failed to carry the election for his candidates.[3]

Upon his return to Washington, he called for a special committee of five seantors "To investigate certain matters making propaganda adverse to Huey P. Long."[4] He explained this request by charging that monied interests in the country were waging a campaign to defame him. More specifically, he said that the immediate reason for the vendetta lay in his recent efforts to establish a

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[1]Ibid., p. 60. [2]Ibid., pp. 217-219.

[3]T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, pp. 669-675.

[4]Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVIII, p. 1545.

model tax law in Louisiana with proposals to take taxes off the little men and tax instead the oil companies, the cotton and stock exchanges in New Orleans, and the high personal incomes. Basically, however, he attributed the campaign to his advocacy of a redistribution of wealth, a philosophy which monied interests viewed as dangerous to the country. Long pleaded eloquently before the senate that he had a right to urge resolutions limiting wealth "without this unleashing of the hounds, this hiring of publicity agents, this swarming of the land with a wealth of agents for four years, this branding of my friends and my associates . . . ."[1]

Long's charges were probably not well grounded in fact although some correspondents asserted that the Morgan interests had hired a public relations firm to defame him.[2] Long's outburst may have partly been a manifestation of feelings of suspicion and persecution which developed during the preceding year. Despite success in placing himself and his program before the American people, Long had suffered a series of political setbacks in 1933 which seemed to have affected him emotionally. In June 1933, President Roosevelt deprived him of patronage, and thus precipitated the break between the two men which came later that year.[3] Roosevelt's reasons for taking this action are not completely clear. Long had opposed some of the administration's measures like the Economy Bill,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 1560-1563.

[2] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, pp. 640-641.

[3] Ibid., p. 639.

but he had not greatly obstructed the New Deal program. Furthermore, it is doubtful that Roosevelt saw Long in 1933 as a dangerous demagogue or a grave threat to democracy.[1] The explanation for the break lies perhaps in the difference in philosophy already referred to and the political ambitions of both men. This highlighted the possibility that a contest between Long and Roosevelt would eventually occur, and the president wanted to weaken Long's base of power in Louisiana. In any event, the president's action amounted to a degree of political humiliation for Long.

Other incidents in 1933 also affected Long adversely. In August, he attended a charity show at the Sands Point Bath and Country Club in Long Island, New York, and apparently as a result of some mischievous behavior in the men's room received a black eye from the hand of an unknown assailant. He received a great deal of ridicule and unfavorable publicity from this although it is questionable whether or not it damaged him politically.[2] More serious, however, were incidents concerning Louisiana politics. Edwin Broussard, the anti-Long senator who had been defeated by John Overton in the 1932 primary, charged the Long organization with fraud, and in the early part of 1933 a senate subcommittee conducted an investigation of the election.[3] While Overton was clearly the winner, the investigation eventually revealed that Long's machine, like previous political groups in Louisiana, had fraudulently procured the choice of

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[1]Ibid., p. 640. [2]Ibid., p. 653.

[2]Ibid., pp. 604-618.

election commissioners favorable to itself. These officials in turn were able to manipulate the vote in certain localities. The investigation also revealed that the Long machine induced state employees to make political contributions. The machine had not stolen the election, but its tactics were not those advocated in civics books. Also, the Louisiana Honest Election League suspected fraud in the November 1932 general election. Two state constitutional amendments, one of which authorized New Orleans to purchase a ferry had passed with more votes than the forces of Long and Walmsley (who were allied at this time) were expected to deliver. The League after much agitation succeeded in getting a recount in September 1933. It revealed significant discrepancies in the original count, but did not nullify the passage of the amendments. Long explained the discrepancies as the result of hasty counting, but his enemies could proclaim that the Long machine was guilty of fraud. Further, Long tried to block the investigation of the election, and at one point had Governor Allen proclaim "partial martial law" in New Orleans. Therefore, his enemies could also charge him with attempting to intimidate those trying to conduct the investigation.[1]

Such incidents as these gave aid and comfort to Long's enemies in Louisiana, and somewhat diminished his prestige and popularity. He encountered hostile crowds during his October tour of the state in behalf of tax reforms, even in areas known to be Long strongholds.[2]

This reversal of fortune affected Long psychologically, according to

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[1]Ibid., pp. 654-660. [2]Ibid., pp. 662-665.

T. Harry Williams. It helped plunge him into abnormal depression and made him fearful, suspicious, and vindictive. His efforts to block the investigation of the constitutional vote was an over-reaction to the true threat which an investigation would pose. "It was the response of a politician who was off balance and not acting with his normal perception."[1]

While Long's charges of a Wall Street vendetta against him appear to be exaggerated and perhaps expressive of feelings of persecution, they do not in themselves indicate that Long was suffering from a severely disturbed mental condition. His subsequent action shows that he was thinking clearly, at least from the standpoint of his political interests. He chose this low point in his career to launch his Share-Our-Wealth campaign, a movement which could possibly force his program upon the major political parties, or alternatively carry Long himself to the presidency.

The Share-Our-Wealth movement began on February 5, 1934, when Long issued an appeal to the people of America to organize Share-Our-Wealth societies in every community. The societies were to support such proposals as a minimum "homestead" worth $5,000 for each family, and old-age pensions of $30 per month for persons over sixty years of age who earned less than $1,000 per year or who possessed less than $10,000 in cash or property. Other proposals included the limitation of working hours to prevent overproduction and create jobs, the limitation of agricultural production to the amounts which could

[1]Ibid., p. 660.

be sold and consumed, better care for veterans, and higher taxation to provide public works for the unemployed.[1]

A brief glance at these proposals reveals that they were entirely consistent with what Long had previously advocated. The guaranteed $5, 000 minimum wealth per family, while a new proposal, certainly could be viewed as a better guarantee for the redistribution of wealth. Long arrived at the $5, 000 figure by calculating the wealth of the United States at 400 billion dollars, or about $15, 000 per family, one-third of which he felt would be a fair limit for the government to guarantee as a minimum level of wealth.[2]

Long included in his Share-Our-Wealth program the proposal for old-age pensions which he had placed before Congress. However, the specific maximum limits on fortunes, incomes, and inheritances which he urged upon Congress were strikingly absent from the Share-Our-Wealth proposals. This would leave him room to lower the maximum levels permitted as expensive new proposals such as guaranteed $5, 000 homesteads and old-age pensions were added to his plans.

Long also fought for measures which he felt would help balance production and consumption in both agriculture and industry. He had, for example, supported a bill offered by Senator Hugo Black of Alabama to establish a thirty-hour work week for major industries. Long claimed that this bill would help

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[1] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVIII, p. 1920.

[2] Ibid., p. 1921.

balance production with consemption, help end unemployment, and thereby help the laboring man to bargain for his wages without having to accept whatever pittance he could get because of the competition of thirteen million unemployed.[1] Long continued to express his preference for the Black bill, even after it had become sidetracked by the NRA proposal which the administration preferred. Long was prepared to go even further than the Black bill in reducing the work week if it was required to balance production with consumption. He indicated that he would not be adverse to a fifteen-hour week, explaining that it would provide more time for leisure, education and the like.[2]

Long's plan to balance agricultural production with consumption had also been advocated prior to launching the Share-Our-Wealth program. In the early part of 1932 he suggested that all cotton growing states completely prohibit cotton production for one year in order to raise the market price. He also advocated a federal plan to balance all agricultural production with consumption through government production control and storage of surplus crops, and a one year's ban on the planting of any crop whenever the surplus amounted to one year's supply. To provide temporary employment for farmers until the surplus had been reduced and they could return to farming, Long proposed a giant program of public works.[3] His position on the farm problem was not, therefore,

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[1] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 1st Session, LXXVII, p. 1247.

[2] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVIII, p. 1921.

[3] Ibid.

entirely in accord with that of the administration. However, Long voted for the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, even though he subsequently expressed much opposition to the destruction of existing farm produce while people were in need of food and clothing.

Long's intention "to care for the veterans of our wars," was also consistent with his previous action in the senate. As indicated earlier, Long had voted against the Economy Act which sought to reduce veterans' compensation. He subsequently supported all attempts to restore the cuts to the veterans, and further still, he joined others in demanding the immediate payment of the soldiers' bonus. The bonus had been granted by Congress in 1924 in the form of a twenty-year endowment insurance policy, payable to the veteran in 1945. However, the depression stimulated demands for its immediate payment. Long supported all legislative efforts toward that end and initiated legislation himself to pay the bonus. He ended the first session of the 73rd Congress protesting the economic plight of the veterans.[1]

At least one issue for which Long had fought, currency inflation, was not included in the Share-Our-Wealth program. For the purpose of inflation, Long offered, in January 1933, an amendment to the Glass Banking bill authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to purchase specific amounts of silver bullion and issue silver certificates in denominations of up to $100. Senator Wheeler of Montana, with Long's approval, then offered a substitute permitting unlimited

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[1] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 1st Session, LXXVII, p. 6130.

coinage of gold and silver at the ratio of 16 to 1.[1] Both amendments were tabled on January 24, but in later congresses Long supported all inflationary moves. The reason for Long's neglect in calling for inflation of the currency in his Share-Our-Wealth program was that he did not see inflation as a satisfactory means of redistributing wealth. He spoke directly to that point a year later when, after expressing support for the Wheeler plan, he stated, "Remonetizing silver does not, of itself, wholly accomplish a sharing of our wealth, but it will facilitate legislation toward that end."[2]

With the Share-Our-Wealth plan, Long converted his original proposals to limit fortunes and redistribute wealth into a more compact and politically attractive program to offer to the people as an alternative to the New Deal. He continued to add to it. Within a year, he included proposals for free education of all capable students through college or professional school[3] and a guaranteed annual income of not less than $2,500 per family.[4] He also changed the proposal for old-age pensions from $30 per month to "an amount sufficient."[5]

This last revision was inspired perhaps by the popularity of Dr. Francis Townsend's plan to provide pensions of $200 per month to the elderly. The educational proposal, however, reflected Long's interest in education from the

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[1]Ibid., 73nd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVI, p. 2293.

[2]The American Progress, February 1, 1934, p. 1, 3-4.

[3]Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, pp. 410-412.

[4]Ibid., pp. 3436-3439. [5]Ibid., pp. 410-412.

time he was governor of Louisiana. The guaranteed minimum income may have been inspired by recent reading. Previous to this proposal, for example, Long quoted the financial writer Roger Babson, who indicated that an annual income of $10,000 per family was possible with intensive production and proper distribution. Long then pointed out that an annual earning of $2,000 per family would be sufficient to let every family live in respectability after they had acquired the basic comforts of a home.[1]

Long's Share-Our-Wealth proposals must have had a great appeal for individuals plagued with the poverty and economic insecurity of the depression years. To others, however, the plan was unrealistic and impractical. Who was right? One might approach the question by examining whether the program was a possible cure for the depression, and whether it was compatible with American economic freedom.

In considering Long's program as a cure for the depression, one is immediately struck by the economic effect of the lesser government spending which actually occurred, by comparison with Long's proposals. By the summer of 1937, for example, largely as a result of New Deal spending, the economy had made steady progress toward recovery.[2] The Index of Physical Volume of

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[1]Ibid., pp. 2832-2834.

[2]William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 244.

Industrial Production had climbed to 113 from the 1932 low of 58.[1] But when the president, worried about the dangers of inflation, cut WPA and PWA funds drastically and invoked a policy of credit contraction, the economy quickly sank to the 1935 levels.[2] Again, after renewed New Deal spending, the economy turned upward again within a few months, and by 1939 the Physical Volume of Industrial Production had risen to 108.[3] Yet New Deal spending had not been extremely great. The federal expenditure for 1933 and 1934 combined was only 10.4 billion dollars, and prior to 1937, the highest expenditure for any one year was never more than 8.5 billion.[4] Long had advocated in 1933 a 10 billion dollar fund to be used for public works alone, and if one adds to this government expenditure for educational benefits, the veterans' bonus, old-age pensions, the buying and storage of surplus farm commodities, and the guaranteeing of incomes and homesteads, it becomes clear that New Deal spending would have been dwarfed by comparison. Long's program would certainly have injected into the economy a sum large enough to permit John Maynard Keynes' idea of "pump priming" a chance to operate better than it actually did under the New Deal.

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[1]Broadus Mitchell, Depression Decade (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1947), Chart: "Physical Volume of Industrial Production, 1929 to 1941," p. 446.

[2]William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, pp. 243-244.

[3]Broadus Mitchell, Depression Decade, p. 446.

[4]Robert Lekachman, The Age of Keynes (New York: Random House, 1966), Chart: "Receipts and Expenditures by the Federal Government, 1929 - 1941," p. 115.

Then with the guaranteed annual income to assure continued mass purchasing power and to guard against another recession, it is quite possible that Long's program would have cured the depression. Did Long know this? He may not have been aware of Keynes' concept of "pump priming," but it is likely, as Williams suggests, that he sensed the relationship of government spending to prosperity.[1]

Was Long's plan practical then from an economic standpoint? Time has proved that some parts of his plan were feasible because they have essentially been accepted and applied to an extent beyond what Long advocated. His proposal to care for the veteran, for example, did not seem to go much beyond promising to pay the bonus immediately and provide good medical and disability assistance. The veterans' bonus has been paid, of course, and today's veterans receive medical care, disability payments, plus aid for education and other benefits. In the field of education, the government has provided aid at all levels, including loans and grants to needy or capable students, although it has not gone so far as the granting of free college education as Long proposed.

Obviously, it was that part of Long's program which proposed to guarantee an annual salary of $2,500 to each family and a $5,000 homestead which was and still is considered most unrealistic economically. By certain standards, one can prove that Long's promise of a homestead and an income were not possible. According to Carleton Beals, if all the private incomes above

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[1]T. Harry Williams, <u>Huey Long</u>, p. 305.

$1,000,000 in the prosperous year 1929 had been equally divided among the families who received less than $2,500, it would have amounted to $35 per family.[1] Such figures are probably correct. The economist Robert Heilbroner, while not discussing Long's proposals, reported that an equal division of all the disposal income of the nation in 1929 would have resulted in an income of $2,300 per household, just $300 above the $2,000 minimum which the Brookings Institute held was required for bare necessities.[2] Obviously, one runs into a distressing impasse if he tries to provide Long's proposed salary by dividing the total income of 1929 or the income of any of the depression years. One does Long's proposals an injustice by declaring them impractical on that basis, however. With the implementation of Long's program, especially the guaranteed salary, the economy would have been drastically different from the economy of 1929 or the economy of succeeding years. The initial government outlays and the continued security of a guaranteed annual income would have boosted spending and consumer demands tremendously, perhaps opening factories by the hundreds and jobs by the millions. Most families who would have needed government subsidies to earn $2,500 would have soon required no supplementary funds at all, and government spending could have decreased from its initial outlay without impairing the economic growth of the country.

If one doubts this, he need only look at the economy since Long's time.

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[1]Carleton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long, pp. 311-312.

[2]Robert L. Heilbroner, The Future as History (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1959), pp. 120-121.

According to Heilbroner, about sixty percent of American families were below the $2,000 subsistence income in 1929. But in 1958, only thirty-six percent were below an income of $4,000, the equivalent of the 1929 subsistence level. Further, according to Heilbroner, much of the thirty-six percent below that level can be attributed to social rather than to economic malfunction, or racial injustice which kept the average level of nonwhite incomes fifty percent below that for whites.[1] Certainly a guaranteed income for each family could today be provided, perhaps even within the present tax structure. Why? Because of the present economic growth which resulted not so much from the implementation of domestic programs as from huge military expenditures. Long's total program would have expanded the economy at least to the point at which minimum incomes could have been guaranteed.

But was the guaranteed $5,000 homestead practical? This is the most difficult of Long's proposals to fulfill. Beals claimed that providing a $5,000 homestead for each family in 1929 would have required the confiscation of all property in excess of $500,000, a limit far below the maximum which Long proposed to allow.[2] Again, his figures are probably correct, but he was still thinking in terms of the 1929 economy, not that which would have been created by Long's proposals. With economic growth, the problem of finding revenue for a minimum homestead lessens somewhat, and in a greatly expanded economy it

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[1] Ibid., p. 123.

[2] Carleton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long, p. 311.

could conceivably have been done with only a heavy taxation of capital instead of a limitation of fortunes. The greatest difficulty in this proposal, however, is that with a large capital levy tax the government would be forced to take wealth in the form of property or securities as well as cash, and such wealth could not be easily distributed. Long himself likely did not know how to handle this problem. He would probably have issued currency against such assets, as once in debate he indicated could be done. While such a solution is weighted heavily with problems, it could conceivably have permitted Long to furnish every family with an initial homestead allowance of $5, 000. It is clearly not as unrealistic as it might seem at first.

Granting that Long's program was economically practical, was it compatible with American economic freedom? A great objection might be that it would have increased government control of the economy, thereby diminishing individual freedom. Obviously, government control and planning would have been necessary on a far greater scale than anything previously known with the possible exception of World War I. If Long had issued currency against the assets of fortunes accruing to the government, for example, inflation would have occurred, and conceivably price controls and other artificial means of governing the economy would have been necessary. Such measures were accepted during World War II and have been proposed occasionally since; few people today equate economic freedom with laissez-faire economics.

Today, we have adopted much of the spirit of Long's program whether we realize it or not. For example, the government has increasingly taken a larger role in the economy in order to lessen poverty and provide such things as decent housing, health facilities, and schools, and it is running into many of the same problems which Long would have faced in his plans. The fact is that we are being forced toward the most radical parts of Long's program by our desire to eliminate poverty and provide decent housing. We are more and more coming to see that a guaranteed annual salary may be necessary, for example, and our struggle to provide decent housing has led to demands for government assistance in the remodeling of cities. While no one calls for a limit on incomes and fortunes, it is partly because the present tax structure provides it in some measure. In the post-New Deal welfare society of the past generation, moreover, incomes have become less concentrated; the share of the total income earned by the top one percent of the population has fallen from nineteen percent in 1929 to less than nine percent in 1958.[1] These things which have transpired since Long's time may have appeared radical to many in the 1930's as the Share-Our-Wealth plan did, but today they do not seem incompatible with our ideas of economic freedom.

Long's program was a basically sound plan to correct the worst abuses of capitalism by placing limits upon the maximum amount of wealth which could be acquired by any individual, keeping a balance of production and consumption, and guaranteeing everyone a share in the work and wealth of the land.

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[1] Robert L. Heilbroner, The Future as History, p. 124.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAMPAIGN TO SHARE THE WEALTH

After the introduction of the Share-Our-Wealth plan on February 5, 1934, Long began an intensive campaign to sell it to the American people. At the same time he continued his efforts in Congress to enact parts of it into law.

On February 23, he delivered a coast-to-coast radio address. Once more he blamed the depression solely on the concentration of wealth, and stated that nothing had been done to decentralize wealth although President Roosevelt and even ex-President Hoover had said that it was necessary. He advocated his own program as a means of solving this basic economic problem. In fact, he indicated, fortunes might have to be limited to ten or fifteen million dollars.[1] Long also defended his Share-Our-Wealth scheme in a New York debate with the socialist leader Norman Thomas. The senator upheld capitalism, asserting that the difficulty was not with the system itself, but with the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. He claimed that socialism would destroy the profit motive, whereas his program would "leave enough profit to stimulate effort and inspire genius" and at the same time "put a curb on [capital] Greed."[2]

Long's efforts began to produce results. The American Progress,

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[1] Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVIII, pp. 3450-3453.

[2] New York Times, March 3, 1934, p. 7, 3-4.

which also participated in the drive, reported that 150,000 people were joining Share-Our-Wealth clubs each month. Such rapid growth, it said, could force the present session of Congress to pass legislation to redistribute the wealth.[1] By the end of March, the paper claimed that 2,128 Share-Our-Wealth societies had been organized with a quarter of a million members.[2]

Long had no success in gaining senate approval for his program, however. On February 22, he supported an amendment to an appropriation bill which would have restored to veterans the same benefits they enjoyed before the passage of the Economy Act. When this measure was defeated he offered an amendment to permit payment of the soldiers' bonus upon the application of the veteran. He argued that his amendment would involve no new obligation as the government had to pay the bonus anyway in 1945, and it would benefit the entire country by placing money in circulation. The administration still opposed bonus legislation, however, as being too expensive and Long's amendment failed by a vote of 64 to 24.[3] He now asked that his proposals for old-age pensions and a limit on fortunes be made the unfinished business of the senate following the disposition of the issue then under consideration, the St. Lawrence Seaway Treaty. Long was again frustrated in his efforts,[4] and he made no further

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[1]The American Progress, March 15, 1934, p. 7, 7-8.

[2]Ibid., March 29, 1934, p. 1.

[3]Congressional Record, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, LXXVIII, pp. 3299-3304.

[4]Ibid., pp. 3889-3890.

attempt in this session to enact his proposals into law. He did, however, support measures of other progressive senators.

A revenue bill proposing to increase income and estate taxes came before the senate in April, 1934. It proposed that surtax rates be increased to fifty-nine percent of incomes over $1, 000, 000, and estate taxes to fifty percent of incomes over $10, 000, 000.[1] Senator LaFollette of Wisconsin and others then attempted with various amendments to raise the rates over those proposed in the bill. Senator LaFollette's amendments proposed the highest rates with seventy-one percent of incomes over $1, 000, 000, and estate taxes of sixty percent of estates over $10, 000, 000.[2] Long supported these efforts to raise the rates, but asserted that they fell far short of what needed to be done. He also criticized the administration again for its failure to decentralize wealth.[3] However, he did not himself attempt to amend the revenue bill to make it conform to his proposals on incomes and inheritances.

This failure may have arisen from his involvement at this time in a bitter fight over the confirmation of Daniel Moore, an anti-Long man, as a collector of internal revenue in Louisiana. Moore's appointment led to a dispute between Long and Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi which at one point held up discussion on the tax bill and became so bitter that parts of it were later stricken

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[1] Ibid., pp. 5971-5973. [2] Ibid., pp. 5971-5973, 6410.

[3] Ibid., pp. 5985-5987.

from the Congressional Record.[1] Also, Long may have feared that a vote on his proposals at this time would result in less support than they had received in 1933. Long's use of the filibuster, his increased denunciation of the administration, and his overbearing personal behavior had alienated a growing number of senators, who might welcome a chance to vote against his measures as an expression of personal animosity toward him. Nevertheless, he continued to fight for inflation and the veterans' bonus, and in addition he was instrumental in getting senate approval for the Frazier-Lemke Federal Farm Bankruptcy Act, a bill which provided relief for farmers through a revision of the bankruptcy laws.

Long's denunciation of the administration became increasingly pronounced during the early part of 1934. Long apparently became convinced late in 1933 that Roosevelt had lied to him about his intention to redistribute wealth, and Long distrusted the president afterward.[2] Also, by June 1934, it must have been clear to Long that he could get none of his Share-Our-Wealth plan through Congress. This knowledge plus his own consuming ambition started him on his drive for the presidency and led to a tremendous struggle with the Roosevelt administration.

The second session of the 73rd Congress ended on June 18, 1934. In the recess which followed, Long strengthened his position in Louisiana, partly

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[1] New York Times, April 6, 1934, p. 1, 1, and April 7, 1934, p. 4, 1.

[2] T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, p. 639.

in preparation for an all-out struggle with the administration. He enhanced his popular support in the state with the passage of a law which provided a two-year moratorium on debts, and he extended his power with laws which gave him more authority to regulate utilities in the state and more influence in determining personnel in public schools and municipal governments.[1] Long had actually acquired too much power in Louisiana by 1934, and he continued to strengthen his position as time went by. He clearly established a secure political base from which to launch a drive against the administration. All this was alarming to some in the administration. Roosevelt himself saw Long not only as a potential rival in the 1936 election, but as a potential fascist.[2] The administration would have to move against him with more force.

The passage of the debt moratorium law in Louisiana gave the administration a chance to express disapproval of Long's activities there. The Public Works Administration temporarily withheld certain funds until it was made clear that the moratorium law did not jeopardize municipal bonds which had been bought by the federal agency. The Internal Revenue Service conducted an income tax investigation of top men in the Long machine with the obvious hope of indicting Long himself for income tax evasion.[3] Long in turn escalated his own war with the administration.

In January, 1935, the American Progress carried an editorial entitled, "The Forgotten Man." It accused the administration of having initiated a new

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[1]Ibid., pp. 737-762. [2]Ibid., p. 795.

[3]Ibid., pp. 793-798.

deal for corporations only, and cited as proof Secretary of Commerce Daniel Roper's statement that the best indicator of recovery was corporate earnings:

> We thought the New Deal was supposed to help the forgotten man. When we saw it failing to do this, we laid the failure to a single mistake in judgement. We still thought the New Deal was trying to help the man out of work, the busted farmer, the hungry children.
>
> But here comes the Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Dan Roper, saying things that make us wonder. He makes us wonder if we've been wrong all the time. He makes us wonder if maybe the New Deal has been aimed to be a new deal for the corporations.[1]

The same issue of the American Progress proclaimed that the number of people enrolled in Share-Our-Wealth societies had grown to twelve million. Whether it was really this large or not, the support for Long's program was undoubtedly very extensive by the time Congress reconvened on January 3, 1935.

Immediately upon his return to the senate, Long inserted into the Congressional Record information alleging that wealth was continuing to concentrate in the hands of a few, and he denounced the administration for its failure to prevent this. He criticized it further for its relentless income tax investigation of members of the Long machine and for its attempt to use WPA funds and other patronage against him in Louisiana. He spoke of the recent legislation there and praised those laws which had helped relieve the little man of certain taxes. He seemed especially proud of the debt moratorium law. He stated that he expected the plan to become a national law and he indicated that

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[1] The American Progress, January 4, 1935, p. 4, 1-2.

he might propose a similar plan to the Congress.[1]

Long also returned, in a national radio address, to the topic of redistributing wealth. He claimed that unemployment had risen by an additional one million men, that five million more were on relief, and that the rich were getting richer while the poor were becoming poorer. He accused President Roosevelt of adamantly refusing to tax the rich, and he lamented the fact that the national debt had risen to $28,500,000,000 without anything to show for it. He indicated that he had completely lost faith in the president, and he called upon the American people to join him in the Share-Our-Wealth movement and work for laws to redistribute the wealth.[2]

In February Long launched a major offensive in his war with the administration by demanding a senate investigation of Postmaster General James A. Farley. He accused Farley of various forms of misconduct in office, particularly the diverting of government contracts to favored companies. This attack may have been partly a response to the administration's continued investigation of Long men which had resulted in an indictment of Seymour Weiss, a top Long lieutenant, for income tax evasion. Nevertheless, a successful attempt to prove that corruption existed high in the Roosevelt organization would have greatly aided Long in his political struggle with the administration.

Long's political strength continued to grow in the early part of 1935.

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[1] Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session LXXIX, pp. 150-159.

[2] Ibid., pp. 410-412.

The administration soon discovered by a secret poll that Long, as a third party candidate in 1936, might receive from three to six million votes, enough possibly to throw the election to the Republicans.[1] This growing strength and the attack on Farley prompted the administration to seek some way to defeat Long in his 1936 Louisiana senatorial campaign.[2] But Long, too, was busy plotting the defeat of administration leaders and others who opposed his program. He had previously moved the date of the Louisiana primary from September to January, 1936, apparently for the purpose of providing time to get re-elected himself as well as to campaign against both Senator Robinson of Arkansas and Robinson's associate, Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi. The New York Times quoted Long as stating, "I'm going to beat Pat and Joe."[3] It later reported that Long had also declared his intention of campaigning against another foe, Senator J. W. Bailey of North Carolina.[4]

On March 4, in what appeared to be part of the administration's strategy, Hugh S. Johnson, the former NRA chief, attacked Long and other alleged extremists, charging that they were insincere pied pipers attempting to attract a following with the bait of sweet but unrealistic programs. Johnson's attack seemed tantamount to a public announcement that the administration

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[1]T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, p. 845.

[2]New York Times, February 26, 1935, p. 12, 1.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., March 24, 1935, p. 32, 8.

considered Long to be a serious political rival, and a great deal of publicity ensued from it. Consequently, when Long answered in a radio speech on March 7, he had perhaps the largest listening audience in his entire career. Long wasted little time with Johnson personally. Instead, he took the opportunity to attack the administration and to propagandize his Share-Our-Wealth program. He blamed the continuing depression on the policies of President Roosevelt, asserting that the blame could be placed nowhere else since the president had been permitted to do whatever he advocated.[1]

A few days after this speech, Long attempted to translate the educational plank of his program into legislation. In a senate speech on March 12, Long declared that it was better to spend relief money to educate the youth of the land in universities and colleges than to spend it for "sweeping leaves from one side of the street to the other."[2] He had argued previously that his plan for educating the youth of the land would help the nation's economy by taking student labor off the market, increasing the demand for more teachers, and since physical facilities would have to be expanded, increasing the number of jobs for architects, engineers, and men of related skills.[3] He now proposed an amendment to a work relief bill to provide one billion dollars to colleges and universities to be used to aid needy students. His amendment was defeated, however,

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[1] Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, pp. 3436-3439.

[2] Ibid., pp. 3443-3452. [3] Ibid., p. 1634.

by a vote of 75 to 5,[1] and another amendment asking for a lesser amount was defeated by the less decisive vote of 58 to 27.[2]

By the first of April, the Democrats in Congress were certain that Long would lead a third party movement in the 1936 presidential election.[3] On April 25, however, in a not uncharacteristic move, Long urged the Republicans to nominate Senator William E. Borah, a liberal Republican of Idaho, for president, stating that he himself would back such a ticket.[4]

In the meantime, Long seemingly won a round with the administration in a struggle for control of federal funds in Louisiana. He obtained from the legislature a state law placing control of all federal relief funds in the hands of a state board dominated by Long men.[5]

The cumulative effect of Long's growing strength was to help push Roosevelt to the left in the latter months of the congressional session. The administration's Social Security bill and the president's tax message were two items which the administration undoubtedly hoped would undermine the programs of Long and other political adversaries. While the program of Dr. Francis Townsend may have been the primary political target of the Social Security bill, the president's tax message seemed to be aimed almost wholly at undermining

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[1] Ibid., pp. 3443-3452. [2] Ibid., pp. 3593-3594.

[3] New York Times, April 9, 1935, p. 11, 1.

[4] Ibid., April 25, 1935, p. 2, 2-3.

[5] Ibid., April 16, 1935, p. 12, 2.

Long's Share-Our-Wealth scheme.

In the area of old-age benefits, the Social Security bill proposed to let many workers beginning in 1942, retire at age sixty-five and receive a pension of $10 to $85 per month. For those already sixty-five and in need of assistance, the bill proposed a maximum of $15 per month from funds jointly contributed by the federal government and the states. Long opposed requiring workers to contribute toward their own pensions, presumably because wealth would be distributed better if the government provided the entire amount. He also opposed requiring states to match federal funds for aiding those already sixty-five. He claimed that economic conditions made it impossible for some states to raise the amount which would be needed. Using Mississippi as an example, Long stated that if the requirement were met by that state, the poor man would have to be taxed far in excess of what he is taxed now.

Long then proposed an amendment to the bill requiring the federal government to provide all the money for old-age pensions and to raise the funds by levying a graduated tax only on those whose wealth was in excess of one hundred times the average family fortune.[1] The amendment called for federal funds in the amount of $3, 600, 000, 000 to provide pensions of $30 per month for persons sixty years of age or older whose income during the preceding year was less than $500 or whose property was valued at less than $3, 000. The capital levy tax with which Long proposed to raise the money for the pensions reached a

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[1]Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, pp. 9292-9298.

maximum rate of ninety-nine percent of fortunes in excess of $8,000,000. Long's amendment was rejected by voice vote in a defeat apparently so decisive that he refrained from asking for a roll call vote.[1] He supported the administration's bill, however, when it passed the senate on June 19 by a vote of 77 to 6.[2]

Long's amendment concerning old-age pensions was his last effort to obtain senate approval for any major Share-Our-Wealth proposal. His legislative efforts in behalf of his plans testify to the seriousness of his desire to see his program become law, however. It is true that Long never introduced a bill to guarantee an annual salary or to provide a homestead, but his failures with less expensive parts of the program would seem to excuse him for that. There is little evidence that his legislative efforts were mere extensions of an insincere propaganda campaign. Some of them were little publicized, like the proposals to strengthen the antitrust law and to amend the constitution permitting direct taxation of capital.

Internal evidence in the unfolding of the Share-Our-Wealth proposals suggests that Long fully intended to carry out his program and was concerned to keep it workable. Each new and expensive proposal for redistributing wealth was accompanied by a suggested reduction in the allowable maximum level of fortunes in order to provide the additional needed revenue. He started out with a proposal to limit fortunes to $100,000,000, but by May 1935 he had reduced

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[1] Ibid., p. 9437. [2] Ibid., p. 8650.

the limit to approximately $5,000,000.[1] Meanwhile he added proposals for a guaranteed homestead, a guaranteed education, and a minimum salary. One of his last proposed reductions of maximum wealth, in May 1935, was followed a week later with a proposal for a gigantic flood control program which had been worked out by the army to limit dust storms, droughts, deserts, and floods--approximately a $10,000,000,000 project.[2] It appears that Long clearly calculated the cost of each new addition to his program and correspondingly reduced fortunes to finance it. Forrest Davis provides evidence to support this view in his biography of Long. He found through interviews with Long that the senator had called in experts to help figure out how to apply Share-Our-Wealth principles. As the experts considered Long's measures, a host of difficult problems appeared and called for extraordinary solutions. To provide homesteads to slum dwellers of crowded cities, for example, new communities would have to be built and existing cities remodeled. To bring work to the people of the new communities, industries would then have to be decentralized and relocated. Nevertheless, Long was not discouraged by the necessity of such gigantic projects. According to Davis, he seems to have accepted them as necessary steps in achieving a redistribution of wealth.[3]

On June 19, the same day that the Social Security bill was passed, the president's tax message was read to the senate. Unlike the Social Security bill

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[1]Ibid., pp. 7048-7050. [2]Ibid., pp. 7586-7594.

[3]Forrest Davis, Huey Long: A Candid Biography, pp. 275-280.

which had weakened only one plank of Long's program, the president's tax message seemed capable of undermining the very basis of the Share-Our-Wealth movement. The president stated, "Our revenue laws have operated in many ways to the unfair advantage of the few, and they have done little to prevent an unjust concentration of wealth and economic power."[1] He then asked that the condition be corrected with higher taxes on inheritances, gifts, incomes, and corporate earnings. While the message did not contain a specific tax program, it contained so much of Long's philosophy that at the conclusion of the message Long voiced his approval with the simple message, "Amen."[2] He later told newsmen that if the message went through as stated, Roosevelt would take 200,000 Share-Our-Wealth clubs into the New Deal camp. He indicated, however, that he was sure the president's program would be emasculated either in committee or on the floor of Congress.[3]

As the administration undoubtedly hoped, the president's message did take some of the momentum out of the Share-Our-Wealth movement--a fact that newspapers were quick to proclaim. However, it did so by adopting the spirit of Long's program, not his specific proposals. It seemed unlikely that the administration would support a tax increase to the extent which Long advocated. Long immediately began to exploit this apparent contradiction of words and deeds

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[1] Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, p. 9657.

[2] Ibid., p. 9659.

[3] New York Times, June 20, 1935, p. 2, 1-2.

in an effort to regain the initiative which he had lost. He sent a public letter to President Roosevelt calling upon him to assist actively in passing a Share-Our-Wealth bill, and he posed certain questions which the president could not answer affirmatively without committing himself either to Long's Share-Our-Wealth plan or some other similar program. Long subsequently pointed out that the message did not in itself constitute a tax program, and he called upon the administration to come forward with a specific bill.[1]

The tax bill which emanated from the president's message was, as Long expected, much weaker than his own scheme. In its final form it did raise tax rates, taking seventy-five percent of incomes in excess of $5, 000, 000, for example, but in actual application, it would add only about $340, 000, 000 to the treasury. By contrast, Long claimed that his plan would raise from $10, 000, 000, 000 to $15, 000, 000, 000 per year. On July 19, in a speech entitled "The Need of Truth and Sincerity in Mr. Roosevelt's Promises," Long denounced the president's bill as anything but a Share-Our-Wealth measure, and he asserted that the ultimate hope of the country lay in his own movement.

While Long's program may have been undermined somewhat by the president's move to the left, Long himself was even more powerful in Louisiana than he had been at the beginning of the session in January. He divided his time between Washington and Baton Rouge, where in a special legislative session he guided twenty-six bills through the senate finance committee in the record time

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[1] Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, pp. 9906-9909.

of twenty minutes.[1] Twenty-five of the bills were passed (Long having dropped one of them) and according to T. Harry Williams they completed the framework of his power structure.[2] One law practically abolished the independence of local governments by placing under the state Civil Service Commission all parish and municipal employees and officials who were not popularly elected. Other laws enabled him to control the hitherto anti-Long stronghold of New Orleans.[3]

Long's new power brought additional denunciation from those who were convinced that he was a dictator. They argued that he failed to use his great power in Louisiana to provide such things as minimum wages and old-age pensions, and therefore he was hypocritical in claiming that he wanted to aid the poor.[4] Long answered with the very weak argument that the people of his agricultural state would not accept much social welfare legislation, and he could not force it upon them.[5] He could have pointed out, however, that his Share-Our-Wealth plan was national in scope and that it required the resources and power of the national government. It would have been illogical for a single state to attempt to limit incomes and fortunes, or guarantee every family an annual income.

By August 1935, it seemed that Long and the president would inevitably have to deal with each other at the polls, and both seemed to be making preparation

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[1]T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, pp. 850-851.

[2]Ibid., p. 851. [3]Ibid., pp. 851-852.

[4]Ibid., p. 857. [5]Ibid., pp. 857-858.

for it. On August 5, Long took note of several newspaper articles alleging that President Roosevelt would enter the 1936 congressional campaigns in behalf of Senators Robinson of Arkansas and Harrison of Mississippi. Long, whose primary election would come first, challenged the president to come to Louisiana and help the anti-Long forces there. He derisively offered to appear on the same platform with the president and discuss, "What has become of the promises of the candidate of the Democratic party for the presidency."[1] He subsequently made many references to the coming Louisiana primary and the use of federal funds in that state to try to defeat him.

On August 14, according to a New York Times report, Long told colleagues that he intended to run for president in 1936 and defeat President Roosevelt even if it wrecked the Democratic party. The article recognized Long's sincerity with regard to his program and possibly placed his objectives in proper order when it listed his aims as three-fold: to beat Roosevelt, to put over the Share-Our-Wealth program, and to become president.[2]

The expected contest never came. On September 8, 1935, Long was mortally wounded in an attempt on his life by Dr. Carl Weiss, a 29 year-old Baton Rouge physician, and on September 10 he died. With no one capable of assuming the leadership of Long's national political movement, the struggle with the administration ceased, and the Share-Our-Wealth movement soon faded out.

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[1] Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st Session, LXXIX, pp. 12476-12477.

[2] New York Times, August 14, 1935, p. 13, 1.

Exactly how close Long could have come to winning the presidency can never be known. Neither is it clear as to how much further his Share-Our-Wealth plan would have evolved. The last complete resume of Long's plans for America was contained in the posthumously published book, My First Days in the White House, which according to the New York Times, Long finished writing about a week before his assassination.[1] The book was intended to portray his policies and accomplishments during his first days as president of the United States, the office which, in the story, he was elected in 1936.

The book is full of satire. Long's desire for specialists in his cabinet led him to appoint Herbert Hoover as secretary of commerce and President Roosevelt as secretary of the navy. Long cautioned reporters, a group who seldom supported him, to refrain from being yes-men, and he urged them to come to him whenever they felt there was incompetence or bad judgment in his administration.[2] He made John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the chairman of the National Share-Our-Wealth Committee, and when the multimillionaire ex-secretary of the treasury, Andrew Mellon, was later made vice-chairman of the same committee, Long observed that "his face lighted with real pleasure."[3] Aside from this, the book obviously revealed something of Long's dream for America. As president, he faithfully began to carry out his Share-Our-Wealth

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[1] Ibid., September 29, 1935, VI, p. 5, 2.

[2] Huey P. Long, My First Days in the White House (Harrisburg: The Telegraph Press, 1935), p. 18.

[3] Ibid., p. 90.

promises by calling upon Congress to guarantee an annual income of $2, 500, a homestead of between $5, 000 and $6, 000, and to provide such things as free college education, old-age pensions, and the bonus for veterans.[1] He also began to carry out the gigantic engineering program to eliminate droughts, dust bowls, and floods which he had previously advocated. In addition, Long went beyond previous proposals by attacking a variety of social problems and launching a major national health program. Apparently to pay for these additional items, Long proposed that incomes and fortunes be limited to one hundred times the national average. This, according to his figures, would limit fortunes to $1, 700, 000 and incomes to $750, 000 per year. But with other government services in mind, perhaps, he indicated that in the future fortunes might have to be limited to $1, 000, 000 or less.[2]

Long's proposals were in many respects ahead of his time. As indicated previously, some of his program has been essentially adopted. It is entirely conceivable that we may go further yet in adopting his program. If the economy keeps expanding through continued military spending or other government outlays, those in need of income and housing, while becoming fewer in number, will not disappear. Then with prosperity to make us generous, there will be humanitarian reasons at least to provide guaranteed incomes and decent housing for the benefit of those few. On the other hand, if we are permitted to cut back military expenditure and do not channel that money into other forms of government spending, a recession is likely to occur, and it is doubtful that

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[1]Ibid., pp. 108-112. [2]Ibid.

present Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and welfare can do more than let the economy hold at a very low level. Under those circumstances, government-sponsored projects such as guaranteed minimum incomes and continent-wide construction programs will be highly desirable and enticing as measures to boost the economy and keep it at a reasonable level of prosperity.

Robert Heilbroner, in The Limits of American Capitalism, points out that science and technology are the forces which will eventually erode capitalism and make government control and planning necessary. As automation causes an increased displacement of labor, he says,

> we can without much difficulty imagine a time when as small a proportion of the labor force as now suffices to overprovide us with food [eight percent] will serve to turn out the manufactured staples, the houses, the transportation, the retail services, even the governmental supervision that will be required.[1]

That inevitable day, perhaps a century hence, may be delayed somewhat by the

> repair and reconstruction of cities, the provision of education, public safety, and conveyances; in the improvement of health and recreation facilities; in the counseling of the young and the care of the aged; in the beautification of the environment.[2]

But beyond that time, what of the unemployed? Obviously, as Heilbroner indicated, government planning will be more pressing, and those displaced by technology will have to be given the right to share in society's output.

Oddly enough, Huey Long wanted to make a greater use of technology

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[1]Robert L. Heilbroner, The Limits of American Capitalism (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 124.

[2]Ibid., p. 123.

even if it meant that work would become incidental. According to Forrest Davis, he planned to provide universities, libraries, and golf courses for the benefit of the people with leisure time.[1] Also, as seen in this study, Long would handle unemployment created by technology by simply sharing the work if it meant only a fifteen hour work week. This solution would probably work for some time, but if the condition develops that Heilbroner foresaw, even that method cannot be relied upon to guarantee employment. It may then be that homesteads, incomes, education, and old-age pensions, all completely at government expense, but justified perhaps by the requirement of a minute amount of work, will have to be provided outright and financed by extremely high taxes which approach the rates which Long advocated.

As that time approaches, it may be necessary that our piecemeal approach to problems of poverty will have to be exchanged for a comprehensive plan such as probably would have grown out of Long's approach in order to enable us to see all of our economic problems in perspective.

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[1] Forrest Davis, Huey Long: A Candid Biography, p. 281.

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