

Huey Long: Share Our Wealth (1935)

Huey Long cemented his control as governor of Louisiana by using state power and state funds to improve social services; to build roads, bridges, and schools; and to reform tax codes. In 1932 he was elected to the u.s. Senate. Initially he supported Roosevelt's New Deal measures, but by 1935 he had broken with the president and launched his own "Share Our Wealth" movement as an alternative to the New Deal. He developed a large grassroots following across the country before being assassinated in 1935.

From Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st sess., 7 May 1935, pp. 7049-7050.

...Here is what we stand for in a nutshell:

1. We propose that every family in America shall at least own a homestead equal in value to not less than one-third the average family wealth. The average family wealth of America, at normal values, is approximately \$16,000. So our first proposition means that every family shall have a home and the comforts of a home up to a value of not less than \$5,000.

We propose that no family shall own more than 300 times the average family wealth, which means that no family shall possess more than a wealth of \$5,000,000. And we think that is too much. The two propositions together mean that no family shall own less than one-third of the average family wealth, nor shall any family own more than 300 times the average family wealth. That is to say that none should be so poor as to have less than one-third of the average, and none should be so rich as to have more than 300 times the average.

We next propose that every family shall have an income equal to at least one-third of the average family income in America. If all were allowed to work, according to our statistics, there would be an average family income of from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. So, therefore, in addition to the home which every family would own and the comforts of life which every family would enjoy, every family would make not less than \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year upon which to live and educate their children.

We propose that no family shall have an income of more than 300 times the average family income. Less the income taxes, this would mean an annual income of \$1,000,000 would be the maximum allowed any one family in 1 year. The third and fourth propositions simply mean that no family should earn less than one-third the average, and no family should earn more than 300 times the average; none to make too much, none to make too little. Everyone to have the things required for life; every man a king.

We propose a pension to the old people. Under our proposal taxes would not be levied upon the sons and daughters, nor the working people to support their aged fathers and mothers. But on the contrary, such support as would be given for old-age pensions would be borne solely by the surplus money which the Government would rake off the big fortunes and big inheritances.

We propose to care for the veterans of our wars, including the immediate cash payment of the soldiers' bonus, and last, but not least, we propose that every child in America have a right to education and training, not only through grammar and high school, but also through colleges and universities. And this education and training would be of such extent as will equip each child to battle on fair terms in the work which it is compelled to perform throughout life. We would not have it that a child could go to college or university provided his parents had the money on which to send him, but it would be the right

of every child under our plan to the costs, including living expenses of college and university training, which could be done by our country at a cost considerably less than is required for the military training which has been given our youth in the past. ...

Let no one tell you that it is difficult to redistribute the wealth of this land; it matters not how rich or great one may be, when he dies his wealth must be redistributed anyway. The law of God shows how it has been throughout time. Nothing is more sensible or better understood than the redistribution of property. The laws of God command it. It is required of all nations that live....

So let us be about our work. It is simple.

Why lie ye here idle? There is enough for all. Let there be peace in the land. Let our children be happy....

How wonderful, how great, how fruitful to all this great land of ours can be. We only have to eliminate useless greed, provide that none shall be too big and none too small. Beautiful America can rise to the opportunity before it. It means to us all:

Every man a king.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did the "Share Our Wealth" program seek to accomplish with regard to personal incomes?
2. Where did Long propose to find the revenue to fund his proposed programs? How realistic was this notion?
3. How accurate were those who charged that Long's program represented an American version of socialism?