Huey P. Long was one of the most colorful and flamboyant American politicians of the twentieth century. To his supporters, he was a champion of the downtrodden, who taxed the rich in order to build 9,000 miles of concrete highways, put 600,000 free textbooks in the hands of poor students, and establish programs that taught 175,000 illiterate adults to read. To his detractors, he was a buffoon, a corrupt demagogue, or even worse, a potential fascist, who used bribery, blackmail, and strong-arm tactics to get his way. One opponent called Long "a common, sordid, dirty soul with the greed and coarseness of the swine . . . the venom of the snake, the cruel cowardice of the skulking hyena." He had a “deduct" system requiring each state employee to pay 10 percent of his salary to Long’s political machine.

In Louisiana, he overthrew a political system dominated by wealthy planters and industrialists and the oil industry. State spending rose from $29 million in 1928, when he took office to $83 million in 1931. Meanwhile, the state’s debt climbed from $11 million to $125 million.

He attracted a national following with his promise to make “Every Man a King.” Millions of Americans joined “Share Our Wealth” clubs, which proposed that Congress confiscate all incomes over $1 million a year, and use the revenue to guarantee every family had a home, an old age pension, and a radio. President Roosevelt called him “one of the two most dangerous men in the country”; the other was Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

In 1935, when he was just 42 years old, Long was assassinated in the 34 story state capital that he had built by a doctor whose family had been feuding with Long’s machine. His last words were, ''God, don't let me die,'' Huey whispered. ''I have so much to do.''

**Document:** 1. Huey P. Long, Senate Speech, April 29, 1932

The great and grand dream of America that all men are created free and equal, endowed with the inalienable right of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness - this great dream of America, this great light, and this great hope - has almost gone out of sight in this day and time, and everybody knows it; and there is a mere candle flicker here and yonder to take the place of what the great dream of America was supposed to be.

The people of this country have fought and have struggled, trying, by one process and the other, to bring about the change that would save the American country to the ideal and purposes of America. They are met with the Democratic Party at one time and the Republican Party at another time, and both of them at another time, and nothing can be squeezed through these party organizations that goes far enough to bring the American people to a condition where they have such a thing as a livable country. We swapped the tyrant 3,000 miles away for a handful of financial slave owning overlords who make the tyrant of Great Britain seem mild.

Much talk is indulged in to the effect that the great fortunes of the United States are sacred, that they have been built up by the honest and individual initiative, that the funds were honorably acquired by men of genius far-visioned in thought. The fact that those fortunes have been acquired and that those who have built them for the financial masters have become impoverished is a sufficient proof that they have not been regularly and honorably acquired in this country.

Even if they had been that would not alter the case. I find that the Morgan and Rockefeller groups alone held, together, 341 directorships in 112 banks, railroad, insurance, and other corporations, and one of this group made an after-dinner speech in which he said that a newspaper report had asserted that 12 men in the United States controlled the business of the Nation, and in the same speech to this group he said, "And I am one of the 12 and you the balance, and this statement is correct."

They pass laws under which people may be put in jail for utterances made in war times and other times, but you can not stifle or keep from growing, as poverty and starvation and hunger increase in this country, the spirit of the American people, if there is going to be any spirit in America at all.

Unless we provide for the redistribution of wealth in this country, the country is doomed; there is going to be no country left here very long. That may sound a little bit extravagant, but I tell you that we are not going to have this good little America here long if we do not take to redistribute the wealth of this country.

2. Huey P. Long, Share Our Wealth, 1934

For 20 years I have been in the battle to provide that, so long as America has, or can produce, an abundance of the things which make life comfortable and happy, that none should own so much of the things which he does not need and cannot use as to deprive the balance of the people of a reasonable proportion of the necessities and conveniences of life. The whole line of my political thought has always been that America must face the time when the whole country would shoulder the obligation which it owes to every child born on earth - that is, a fair chance to life, liberty, and happiness.

Here is what I ask the officers and members and well-wishers of all the Share Our Wealth Societies to do:

First. If you have a Share Our Wealth Society in your neighborhood or, if you have not one, organize one - meet regularly, and let all members, men and women, go to work as quickly and as hard as they can to get every person in the neighborhood to become a member and to go out with them to get more members for the society. If members do not want to go into the society already organized in their community, let them organize another society. We must have them as members in the movement, so that, by having their cooperation, on short notice we can all act as one person for the one object and purpose of providing that in the land of plenty there shall be comfort for all. The organized 600 families who control the wealth of America have been able to keep the 125,000,000 people in bondage because they have never once known how to effectually strike for their fair demands.

Second. Get a number of members of the Share Our Wealth Society to immediately go into all other neighborhoods of your county and into the neighborhoods of the adjoining counties, so as to get the people in the other communities and in the other counties to organize more Share Our Wealth Societies there; that will mean we can soon get about the work of perfecting a complete, unified organization that will not only hear promises but will compel the fulfillment of pledges made to the people.

It is impossible for the United States to preserve itself as a republic or as a democracy when 600 families own more of this Nation's wealth - in fact, twice as much - as all the balance of the people put together. Ninety-six percent of our people live below the poverty line, while 4 percent own 87 percent of the wealth. America can have enough for all to live in comfort and still permit millionaires to own more than they can ever spend and to have more than they can ever use; but America cannot allow the multimillionaires and the billionaires, a mere handful of them, to own everything unless we are willing to inflict starvation upon 125,000,000 people.