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# Huey Long and Occupy Wall Street: Populist Protest in Eras of Economic Turmoil

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Huey Long and Occupy Wall Street:  
Populist Protest in Eras of Economic Turmoil

Kevin Fitzgerald

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the  
Honors Degree of Bachelor of Arts in History

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Adviser: Mark Naison  
Readers: Jeannine Hill-Fletcher, Paul Levinson

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"The Revolution Will Be Live"

--Gil Scott Heron

Under the banner, "We are the 99%," Occupy has, for the last 7 months, attempted to exemplify the method and fervor of the populist movements of the Middle East that gave rise to 2011's "Arab Spring." With hopes that a more equitable economy might be achieved, occupy has set down encampments across the U.S. protesting an exploitive economy that has resulted in monetary inflation, a housing crisis, over a trillion dollars in student debt, and extensive job loss, all with limited government intervention.

Occupy has existed as a radical response to an economy that has grown increasingly exploitive and unbalanced over the last 30+ years. Many criticize Occupy for holding no discernable argument or plan for the radical action that would be required to repair an American economy that occupiers view as broken. Critics have characterized the group as a hodgepodge assortment of fools, freeloaders, and non-conformists with no clear message or goals. They are correct in some of these characterizations. Occupy is an assorted group! Their message is broad! And these facts only serve to show that the problem with the American economy is large, varied, and extreme. The Occupy protest reflects the problem—Critics miss this significance.

Yet what everyone has missed—occupiers and critics—is the existence of political and populist precedent to the Occupy movement. Occupy Wall Street need not look to the "Arab Spring" to inspire protest of American economic turmoil; there is a homegrown historical precedent for their economic protests. This precedent is not found in the New Deal "fix" for America's Great Depression woes, as some might propose. Rather, precedent can be found in one of FDR's greatest critics and rivals, Huey P. Long.

In the final years before his assassination in 1935, Huey P. Long, the popular Louisiana Senator and demagogue, launched his "Share Our Wealth" program. This program provided a powerful critique of the unequal distribution of the American economy. Long pushed a redistributive plan in order to provide help to those suffering most under the economic turmoil of the Great Depression. His plan would do this by taxing most heavily America's top 1%. His message was one of the 99%.

Like Occupy, Huey Long found his base in a large and varied group, one that shows similarities to Occupy's membership—students, veterans, farmers, and, overwhelmingly, the poor. He started local "Share Our Wealth" clubs to build broad based discontent into a political movement. While local clubs held general assemblies, he occupied space in the Senate, spending days and weeks filibustering the New Deal policies he felt were too modest in such an extreme time of poverty.

Huey P. Long was the one of the most prominent populists of the 20th century and the original "occupier." His final years demonstrated his greatest push towards a populist challenge to economic inequality. His "Share Our Wealth" platform existed as a direct challenge to Depression conditions and the economic inequalities of the 1920s and 30s that led to the collapse of American equality. However, before he could push his "Share Our Wealth" program to the fore of American political system in the 1936 presidential election, Huey Long was assassinated. His "Share Our Wealth" ideas, for the most part, died with him.

This thesis acts to highlight the similarities between Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth" Program and Occupy Wall Street. However, more than a simple comparison, I hope to show that Long created a national viable populist protest, which effected real change in the form of FDR's Second New Deal (one can only guess what policy might have been enacted if Long had lived to challenge FDR for the presidency in 1936). As of the Spring of 2012, Occupy has failed to force or inspire a policy response to the

collective voice of the 99%. This thesis will be an exploration of how Long rose to national prominence in his own time, it will stand to highlight Long's existence as a national figure and his "Share Our Wealth" movement as a sizeable sect of the American public during the Great Depression. More importantly, however, this thesis will serve as a call for Occupy to recognize and emulate Long, his "Share Our Wealth" policies, and his radical action as once again America finds herself in extreme economic turmoil.

## National Reception and Recognition of Huey Long and His Share Our Wealth Program

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Huey Long has long been represented as Lord of Louisiana, Savior of the South; yet his power and influence extended far beyond the borders of his home state. Huey Long, affectionately dubbed the *Kingfish* captured the hearts minds of Depression-Era America. He wielded influence across the country, and inspired radical activism and participation in every corner of the country

Much that has been written of Huey Long has concentrated on his work within Louisiana; historian after historian has focused on the revolutionary role and rule of Long within his home state. However, the raucous and spirited Long was not bound by the borders of Louisiana—he broadcast his message of recovery and relief nation wide proclaiming "Every Man A King." Long's "Share Our Wealth" plan held certain appeal during the difficult times of the Depression; and using this plan, Long attempted to rally the entire nation behind himself and his campaign to challenge FDR and his *New Deal* solutions to the Great Depression.

While Huey Long's work within the state of Louisiana is evident and measurable (roads and bridges built during his time in office still makeup the backbone of Louisiana's infrastructure), his effect on the rest of the country is vague to say the least. One of the foremost historians on Huey Long, Alan Brinkley, admits, "No records appear to have survived, if they ever existed of Long's national organization; no national election, and only one, rudimentary public opinion poll measured his national popularity. And most of the men and women whom he attracted to his banner remain, necessarily, faceless and unknown."<sup>1</sup> The "Secret Poll" conducted by Emil Hurja and the Democratic National Committee in 1935 serves as the only tangible measure of Long's national appeal. However, there exist a fair number of articles, letters, and Share Our Wealth Society estimates, which lend credence to the argument that Long's reception and recognition extended to a national level.

Though historians have failed to study the extent of the *Kingfish's* appeal, evidence shows that Long did indeed command a sizeable amount of the American public's attention in his few short years as Louisiana Senator and public personality. Long established himself as a national leader and a voice for millions suffering under Depression conditions. Though Huey Long did not survive to contend in the presidential election of 1936, the threat of his "Share Our Wealth" program greatly shaped FDR's '36 platform and arguably inspired his Second New Deal policies.

National reception of Long becomes most evident when assessing the following: Share Our Wealth issues and position, Long's exposure and media coverage, the

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Brinkley, "Huey Long, The Share Our Wealth Movement, and the Limits of Depression Dissidence," *Louisiana History: The Journal of Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 22, No 2 (Spring, 1981): 120-121

establishment of local Share Our Wealth Societies, the varied regional reception of Long, Emil Hurja's "Secret Poll," and FDR's response to a Long presidential threat.

## Share Our Wealth Issues and Positions

The primary reason Long came to appeal to so many varied followers and fans lay in his Share Our Wealth plan and its radical tenets and principles. Long's plan appealed to a number of different constituents—veterans, the elderly, the working class, students, farmers, most of all, the poor. Long drew support from all of these groups, ensuring a broad and diverse backing. In order to understand just why Huey Long and his Share Our Wealth platform appealed to so many different groups it is particularly illuminating to cite the very "Share Our Wealth" Manual distributed to Long's followers and "Share Our Wealth" Society members.

### Principles and Platform:

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

These basic points of Long's plan contain calling cards for various groups, yet would appeal most to those suffering greatest under the Depression, unhelped by FDR's New Deal programs. His plan acted as an alternative to FDR's programs, which Long saw as neither helpful nor forceful enough. He barraged FDR's plans and programs, claiming they were not only unhelpful but detrimental to the American condition.

"The trouble with the Roosevelt administration is that when their schemes and isms have failed, these things I told them not to do and voted not to do, that they think it will help them to light out on those of us who warned them in the beginning that the tangled messes and noble experiments would not work. The Roosevelt administration has had its way for two years. They have been allowed to set up or knock down anything and everybody. He got his plans through Congress. So it has been that while millions have

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<sup>2</sup> Huey Long, Share Our Wealth pamphlet: 1, (access available at: <http://www.hueylong.com/programs/share-our-wealth-speech.php>)

starved and gone naked; so it has been that while babies have cried and died for milk; so it has been that while people have begged for meat and bread, Mr. Roosevelt's administration has sailed merrily along, plowing under and destroying the things to eat and to wear, with tear-dimmed eyes and hungry souls made to chant for this new deal so that even their starvation dole is not taken away, and meanwhile the food and clothes craved by their bodies and souls go for destruction and ruin.<sup>3</sup>

By the start of 1935, Long and his program had won national media recognition in the form of a lengthy *New York Times* story. "Senator Long declared that there was no further hope from the Roosevelt policies and urged the American people to join in the Long "Share Our Wealth" and "Every Man a King programs. His predictions as to economic conditions in 1933 and 1934 had all come true, the Senator declared justifying his saying 'I told you so.'"<sup>4</sup>

Long was particularly attune to the lack of recovery under the New Deal, as his home state of Louisiana suffered particularly under Depression conditions.<sup>5</sup> Here he used his power as Governor the Senator to pull Louisiana out of the mire of the Depression primarily through enactment of public works programs—thus explaining his popularity within the Bayou State. *The New Republic* projected Huey's works to its national audience in its feature of Long in its February 1935 issue. "Paved roads, free schoolbooks and a continual taxation harrying of Standard Oil and the public utilities, with imminent though yet unrealized rate reductions, and you get a pretty good idea of why the doctrine of wealth sharing has taken hold among the poor whites, who constitute the majority of Louisiana's electorate."<sup>6</sup>

As said above, Long pandered to a variety of constituents, beyond his Louisiana constituents; he appealed not only to the "poor whites" of the Deep South but to the vast numbers of destitute that comprised America during the Great Depression. Long projected his message to Iowans in a national Spring tour. His message was catalogued once again by the *New York Times*, "Long promised a homestead worth \$5,000 for each family and a yearly income of from \$2,000 to \$2,500."<sup>7</sup> While his plan appealed to millions of Americans suffering most greatly from the Depression, also played on the poor's frustrations with the super-rich. In order to provide homes for the homeless and food for the hungry, Long's wealth-sharing plan would employ heavy taxes on the small, fortunate minority. The plan would place a cap on fortunes—"no man would have more than \$5,000,000, with a yearly income of 'a million or so.'"<sup>8</sup> Long's plan would be paid for using the monies collected from the rich—this wealth sharing, Long believed, would be a simple cure for the Great Depression. In his "Share Our Wealth" Manual, Long makes a simple case for his wealth-redistribution, "It is not the difficulty of the problem which we have; it is the fact that the rich people of this country—and by rich people I mean the super-rich—will not allow us to solve the problems, or rather the one little problem that is afflicting this country, because in order

<sup>3</sup> Huey Long, Radio Speech "Share Our Wealth," Broadcast 7 March 1935, National Broadcasting Company, New York, accessed at: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/hueyplongshare.htm>, Printed in Congressional Record March 12, 1935

<sup>4</sup> Staff, "'Every Man A King' Drive By Long Is On," *New York Times*, January 10, 1935, 1

<sup>6</sup> Hodding Carter, "How Come Huey Long?," *New Republic*, February 13, 1935, 12

<sup>7</sup> Staff, "Nation Mortgaged, Long Tells Iowans," *New York Times*, April 28, 1935, 1

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 1

to cure all of our woes it is necessary to scale down the big fortunes that we may scatter the wealth to be shared by all the people."<sup>9</sup>

Homesteads for the poor would not be the only channel for the wealth collected from the millionaire's of America—a portion of this money would go to veterans, one of the most troubled and frustrated groups during the Depression. Long was adamant in his belief that veterans ought to receive the bonuses promised them by every president since the Great War's end. Although Long's promise to veterans was not as detailed as his homestead promise to the poor, it was no less vehement, "We ought to take care of the veterans of the wars in this program. That is a small matter. Suppose it does cost a billion dollars a year—that means that the money will be scattered throughout this country. We ought to pay them a bonus...every man that wore the uniform of this country is entitled to be taken care of, and there is money enough to do it; and we need to spread the wealth of the country."<sup>10</sup>

Veterans it seems strongly supported Long, adding a strong and active contingent to his group of supporters—"Share Our Wealth championed the veteran's bonus and was closely associated with veterans' organizations, which had marched on Washington twice in the 1930s. Long participated in and encouraged demonstrations of veterans and their supporters on behalf of the bonus."<sup>11</sup>

Another group that constituted a strong following of Long's was the elderly. Playing off of Townsendian ideas of recovery, Long made an allowance for the elderly poor a tenet of his Share Our Wealth Program. His idea, the same as Townsend's, held that, with a federally allotted allowance, persons over 60 would retire from their work if they were to be guaranteed an income on which to survive. With the retirement of these older workers, thousands perhaps millions of jobs would open up to the jobless multitude of the Depression Era.

Another group clogging the crowded Depression job market were young people who forwent college in order to make money for their struggling families. In another attempt to open the job market while simultaneously aiding struggling victims of the Depression, Long aimed to make college education more affordable and available to all. Long believed that college education should be available not only to the privileged and wealthy but to all. "The 'share our wealth' program contemplates that from the billions of excess revenue brought into the United States Treasury by limiting fortunes to a few million dollars to any one person, that such large sums will be expended by the Government as will afford college education and professional training to all students based upon their mental capacity and energy rather than upon the wealth of their parents."<sup>12</sup> Long had already made good upon this promise by building a \$15,000,000 University in Baton Rouge, this University would become LSU.

It is clear that Long held certain a sway with the poor, veterans, elderly, and students; however, most central to Long's group of supporters was undoubtedly the farmer. Growing up in Northern Louisiana, Long's popularity was fed by his agrarian roots and these foundations only grew larger as he rose to power in the South. "Reliance upon agrarian support in the first stages of his public career made natural his popularity among farmers. That popularity increased as his movement grew. Greatest

<sup>9</sup> Long, "Share Our Wealth" pamphlet, 7

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 15-16

<sup>11</sup> Edwin Amenta, Kathleen Dunleavy, Mary Bernstein, "Stolen thunder? Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth," Political Mediation, And the Second New Deal," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 59, No. 5 (Oct., 1994), 681

<sup>12</sup> Long, "Share Our Wealth" pamphlet



in the Southern states it extended to other areas as well."<sup>13</sup> A farmer's weekly in Oklahoma claimed, "No man in the past quarter century has been as potent a factor in our national political life as Long."<sup>14</sup>

Long claimed in his "Share Our Wealth" pamphlet that his was a "program of national organization"; and his audience was surely a national one, appealing to the interests and issues of a great and varied group. However, Long and his plan were far from receiving national acceptance. Senate Majority Leader and Southern Democrat, Joseph T. Robinson, claimed "Long was trying to send the people 'on a chase after a bag of gold at the rainbows end' and predicted that 'in the end they will realize his duplicity and recognize the deceit that has been practiced upon them when the fragments of their shattered hopes have been enveloped in despair.'"<sup>15</sup>

Long's opposition was nearly as loud as the boisterous *Kingfish*; yet Huey, undeterred, made it a point to voice his opinion, program, and Depression solution to the desperate ears of the American public. Long would attempt to win himself and his "Share the Wealth, Every Man a King" program the media spotlight—it is no wonder then that a central tenet of Long's program was the allotment of a radio to every household unable to afford one.

### Huey Long's Exposure and Media Coverage

Radio was central to Long and his "Share Our Wealth" Society; it was the primary medium through which Long could reach the American masses and challenge FDR's reassuring "fireside chats." While Long was familiar with radio, he truly began to utilize radio as a means of exposure in 1935—the same year Long's popularity really took off.<sup>16</sup> "[Long's] most important step was the decision to expand his use of radio. He had made broadcasts over a national network only twice in 1933 and once the following year. In the first three months of 1935, he doubled his previous total, speaking over NBC six times; and while his pace slowed somewhat through the spring and summer, he continued to make use of the network frequently thereafter."<sup>17</sup> Although his radio promotion garnered him sizeable support, Long already had a strong and avid group of fans—in 1934 Long was a top-five vote-getter in *TIME* magazine's "Man Of The Year" contest.<sup>18</sup> His foray into the radio scene, however, allowed him to communicate on a new wavelength with his public.

Long's addresses reached households across the nation and resulted in a huge swell of support for his "Share Our Wealth" challenge to Roosevelt's more moderate Depression-fixes. Long "summoned millions to radio loud-speakers throughout the country for the real purposes of spilling into their ears his honey-simple share-the-wealth plan whereby he promises to make of every man a king."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Alan Brinkley, "Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin & The Great Depression," (First Vintage Books Edition, August 1983), 198-199

<sup>14</sup> Stroud, *Democrat: The Farmer's Weekly*, May 10, 1935

<sup>15</sup> Staff, "Robinson Assails Huey Long's Plan," *New York Times*, March 22, 1935, 5

<sup>16</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Brinkley, "Voices of Protest," 169

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 203

<sup>19</sup> Turner Catledge, "Long Becomes a National Political Riddle," *New York Times*, March 10, 1935, E3

This radio amplification made Long a national figurehead and wired his anti-FDR, pro-redistribution sentiments across the country. Long's comments and criticisms did not go unheard by the Roosevelt Administration, yet there was little the Administration could do to quiet Long or the radio companies amplifying him. Long's addresses and the controversy surrounding them reached even smaller newspapers like the *Urbana Daily Courier*. Reporter Carter Field wrote, "White House irritation against the radio companies for permitting Kingfish Huey Long to get so much free time is growing pretty hot. But it is not easy to make the case. To put it clearly and simply would lay the White House open to a charge of attempted censorship."<sup>20</sup> FDR and his fellows in office could only sit by their firesides and listen to Huey Long bash the New Deal for its lack of more radical action and promote Every Man a King.

Aiding Long's access to the airwaves were radio companies interested in drawing large audiences. Broadcasters constantly invited Long to speak on their channel's as the boisterous and eloquent Senator might raise ratings for stations, happy for the attention even Long's message was radical and subversive. Radio companies had been allotting time to the radical Father Coughlin for years despite the fact that he often undermined FDR and his New Deal politics. Again Urbana reporter, Carter Field documented "[Radio companies] know that both Long and Father Coughlin are tremendous drawing cards over the radio. But they do not like the idea of giving away time to some one who will produce irritation at the White House."<sup>21</sup>

Long had become a radio celebrity and he knew from his radio reception that his wealth-sharing message had gained support well outside the borders of his homeland. He and his "Share Our Wealth" Program had gone national: Long knew it, the White House knew it, and the *New York Times* knew it. "There is a strong feeling at least here in Washington that the 'Kingfish' may have to be taken more seriously. No little of the Washington opinion comes from an appearance that Huey is beginning to take himself more seriously. He is beginning to feel himself a national issue."<sup>22</sup>

In concordance with the resonance of Long's voice in the homes of millions of Americans, came the establishment of the "Share Our Wealth Society." Via radio, the *Kingfish* implored all attentive Americans to form, lead, and participate in local organizations to further project Long's "Share Our Wealth" messages. Long had sown the seeds of homegrown uprising. "[Long] can turn tomorrow to an organization of more than 2,000,000 persons. They are enrolled in 'Share Our Wealth' clubs in practically every State in the Union."<sup>23</sup> Having culled the millions of Americans' ears with his addresses, Long planned to enlist his radio fans to reach out to all those still ignorant of him and his "Share Our Wealth" plan.

Long passed the torch to groups, clubs, and societies around the country. "The plan now is for the formation of societies in every State, to hold regular meetings with a view not only to promulgating the teachings that they should share in the wealth of others, but to plan the organization of societies in other jurisdictions."<sup>24</sup> The drive was on, Long was to become ever more nationally known, and he would do so through "Share Our Wealth" Societies.

<sup>20</sup> Carter Field, "Radio Time For The Kingfish," *Urbana Daily Courier*, April 1935, 6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>22</sup> Catledge, "Long Becomes A National Political Riddle," E3

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, E3

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, E3

## Establishment of Local "Share Our Wealth" Societies

While invitations to join "Share Our Wealth" clubs were sent across radio waves, the formation of local clubs and groups was well underway. Huey P. Long made his first official radio announcement of the formation of a "Share Our Wealth" Society on February 23, 1935—it would be a national organization pushing the goals of wealth redistribution and an answer to the Depression, which seemed yet unfazed by FDR's New Deal.<sup>25</sup> Although his would be a nation-wide organization, Long felt establishment of local "Share Our Wealth" Societies was central to his mission. His campaign for the office of both Louisiana Governor and Senator had been won through grassroots organization and local support clubs; and using these campaigns as a model he attempted to take to the national stage with the help of local societies' support.

Local clubs would be Long's answer to the resistance he felt in the nation's Senate. Here his plan had been scoffed at and laughed off by Democrat FDR supporters and conservative Republicans. Huey commented, "When I went to the United States Senate I introduced a resolution—a simple one, it was looked upon as a bombshell... Then a club was formed in the South 'The Share-the-Wealth Club' and other clubs."<sup>26</sup> Long took his plan from the Capitol building to local communities across America, inciting all to join his "Share Our Wealth" Societies and become active in recruiting more members for local chapters. He directed in his "Share Our Wealth" pamphlet, "At all meetings plans and arrangements should be made for a constant effort to enlist the whole people of the neighborhood or community to join in this movement and undertaking to free all the American people from an economic and financial enslavement."<sup>27</sup>

While estimates of the participation and membership of Long's clubs and Societies vary greatly, Long himself claimed to have more than 7.7 million members by February of 1935<sup>28</sup>. Long's notoriously meticulous secretary Mr. Christenberry claimed the number of local clubs totaled a precise 27,431.<sup>29</sup>

Such great numbers could easily have been won as "Share Our Wealth" Societies collected no fees or dues; in addition, joining the clubs seemed to be a simple task. "Five hundred gaunt, grinning farmers and small-town ne'er do-wells file beside the sound truck and sign the cards that automatically make them members of the National Share Our Wealth Society of Huey Long... The organization of a Share Our Wealth club is as pleasingly effortless as its promised benefits. A prospective member has only to obtain, free of charge, a membership card, following one of the reverend Gerald's rousing meetings"<sup>30</sup> For those unable to attend one of Long's or his accomplices meetings, one needed only to send a letter to Long's Senate office to receive information on and admission to the "Share Our Wealth" Society; and for \$1 one could purchase 1,000 buttons to recruit their friends.

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<sup>25</sup> Robert E. Snyder, "Huey Long and the Presidential Election of 1936," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring 1975), 119

<sup>26</sup> Staff, "Huey Long Finds Slump Unabated," *New York Times*, January 12, 1935, 3

<sup>27</sup> Huey Long, "Share Our Wealth" pamphlet, 3

<sup>28</sup> Armenta, "Stolen Thunder?," 678

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 687

<sup>30</sup> Hodding Carter, "How Come Huey Long," 12-13

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."  
*John Chapter 8, Verse 32.*

## SHARE OUR WEALTH

### Every Man A King

++

It fares the land to hastening like a prey,  
 Where wealth accumulates and men decay.  
 Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,  
 A breath can make them as a breath has made,  
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied."  
 —Oliver Goldsmith.

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Containing authorities, laws, statistics and published  
 comments of Leaders of all times.

BY  
**HUEY P. LONG**  
 United States Senator  
 Washington, D. C.

## AUTHORITY AND STATISTICS

"It fares the land to hastening like a prey,  
 Where wealth accumulates and men decay.  
 Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,  
 A breath can make them as a breath has made,  
 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
 When once destroyed, can never be supplied."  
 —Goldsmith.

FROM THE BIBLE:

"The Lord is our law giver."  
 —*Isaiah, Chapter 33, Verse 22.*

"The profit of the earth is for all."  
 —*Ecclesiastes, Chapter 5, Verse 10.*

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim  
 liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants  
 thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return  
 every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every  
 man unto his family."  
 —*Leviticus, Chapter 25, Verse 10.*

"At the end of every seven years thou shalt make  
 a release. . . . Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his  
 neighbor shall release it; he shall not exact it of his brother,  
 because it is called the Lord's release."  
 —*Deuteronomy, Chapter 15, Verses 1 and 2.*

"Wherefore ye shall do my statutes and keep my  
 judgments and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in  
 safety; and the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall  
 eat your fill and dwell therein in safety."  
 —*Leviticus, Chapter 26, Verses 18 and 19.*

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your  
 miseries that shall come upon you."  
 "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are  
 moth-eaten."  
 "Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of  
 them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your  
 flesh as it were fire."  
 —*Book of James, in the New Testament,  
 Chapter 5, first verses.*

18

## MANUAL

SUGGESTED FOR

## SHARE OUR WEALTH SOCIETY

### "EVERY MAN A KING"

#### REGULAR MEETINGS

Each Society, however large or small, should arrange to have regular meetings. This may be once each week, or once each month. As often as possible, the meetings should be open to the public so that the purposes for the society may be made known to everybody and the membership thereby increased. The day and hour for meetings should be decided in accordance with what is best in each community. In some places this time might best be some evening, or night, of the week. In other places a Saturday or Sunday afternoon might be the best time to meet.

#### SPECIAL MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS

Whenever the membership may be enlarged and more people may be brought into contact with the aims and purposes of this society, public programs should be arranged at which the needs and purposes for the organization may be explained.

At all meetings articles should be read and, when possible, speeches should be made, showing: 1st: The need for spreading the wealth and work in America; and 2nd: The conditions now existing in America, because the wealth is concentrated in the hands of the few, contrary to the laws of God and the purposes of our Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States.

That all may know, without question, that we are on the right track and trying to do what is necessary to save our people, there is included in this manual, following the speech I delivered, the quotations from the Laws of Our Lord and the Gospel of Christ, together with the pertinent passages taken from the Declaration of Independence and from the remarks of leading statesmen, philosophers and learned men of all times and climes.

2

At all meetings plans and arrangements should be made for a constant effort to enlist the whole people of the neighborhood or community to join in this movement and undertaking to free all the American people from an economic and financial enslavement because of there being no limit on the luxury of the few and no protection against the poverty and destitution of the masses.

#### NUMBER OF MEMBERS FOR SOCIETY

It is necessary, first, that each community have a society, or many societies where it serves best, to get members. A live membership of ten is better than a sleeping membership of one hundred.

After the society is first organized and put to work, then the next thing to do is to get as many members as possible. Already there have been formed societies in which nearly every person of age in the whole community has enlisted for membership. One community with 5,000 adult inhabitants reports nearly that number of members in their society. Several other societies report almost as successful organization.

All that is necessary to get members is for the people to know what the work is we are undertaking. There is a certain amount of ignorance to be overcome. Newspapers and magazines, owned and controlled by the money masters, have spread so much false propaganda that many people who read the most are the most ignorant and deluded on the cause of conditions now prevailing and the simple manner by which they could be corrected.

#### ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEES

Each society should, where possible, have two committees as follows:

- 1st: A committee in charge of the work of securing members; and
- 2nd: A committee to go into other communities and neighborhoods to get societies organized in them.

The work of getting members and stirring other communities to action should not be confined to the members of two committees, however. They should have the help of every member of the Society in their efforts.

3

31<sup>31</sup> Huey Long, Share Our Wealth pamphlet:

Groups spread from Long's Louisiana across the country inciting local "dissidents who hoped to disrupt normal patterns of politics by injecting the issue of redistribution."<sup>32</sup> Speaking to the radical nature of the characteristically destitute Long-supporters, *North American Review* writer, Charles Adams, claimed, "Long's Share-the Wealth menaces the middle class along with the rich."<sup>33</sup> This alleged menacing of the rich came only as a response to a direct call by Long, "Rockefeller, Morgan and their crowd stepped up and took enough for 120,000,000 people and left only enough for 5,000,000 for all the other 125,000,000 to eat. And so many millions must go hungry and without these good things God gave us, unless we call on them to put some of it back."<sup>34</sup>

To those who asked, Long sent his "Share Our Wealth" Manual—rife with quotes statistics, and the "Share Our Wealth" Principles and Platform (previously cited). Long was vehement in his message for citizens to start up "Share Our Wealth" Societies. He demanded, "Get together in your community tonight or tomorrow and organize one of our Share Our Wealth Societies. If you do not understand it, write me and let me send you the platform; let me give you the proof of it."<sup>35</sup>

Long sent his invitations, pamphlets, and buttons country-wide imploring all underprivileged and underserved to join in a local chapter of the National "Share Our Wealth" Society. Long's goal was to create tens of thousands of local "Share Our Wealth" Society chapters, hoping to push his method of economic recovery over the FDR's New Deal. This method was brilliant as it created thousands of autonomous, multiplying clubs that Long's message and platform. Long did not centralize his Society in Louisiana or even the South; rather, he allowed it to extend to the whole nation, to every community, in every city, in every State of the Union. In this way, Huey Long earned a national following, one which *occupied* every region of the United States.

### Varied Regional Reception of Huey Long

Standing as an alternative to the near complete support of FDR in the early 1930s, The demagogue of the Deep South held popularity in nearly every state in the country—from the Southeast to San Francisco, rural Iowa to urban Philadelphia, Arizona to Detroit.

Huey Long naturally found his strongest support in his home South; the Gulf South states looked to the *Kingfish* for strength and leadership, as this region continued to suffer from Depression conditions that had begun to subside in much of the rest of the country. Critic of Long, Norton McGiffin vehemently lamented the strong show of Southern support for Long, as the misguidings of fools. He seethed, "The boys at the forks of the creeks in Louisiana and Mississippi and Arkansas are now Democrats in name only. Still enduring miseries which the rest of the country has to some extent forgotten, they are ready to...shake hands with the devil if his Satanic Majesty can contribute in any way to a lightening of their burdens. Since the Honorable Huey is considered in Louisiana the devil's own diplomatic representative here on earth, the

<sup>32</sup> Armenta, "Stolen Thunder?," 680

<sup>33</sup> Charles Magee Adams, "Who Bred These Utopias," *The North American Review*, Vol. 240, No. 1 (June 1935), 18

<sup>34</sup> Staff, "Every Man A King," 6

<sup>35</sup> Long, "Share Our Wealth," pamphlet, 16

'Cajuns' and the crackers, turn naturally to him for aid and comfort."<sup>36</sup> Proving the immense power Huey held over the South was the election of Hattie Caraway's as Arkansas Senator. One week before the election, Long made a tour of Arkansas, in which he spoke to over 200,000 voters. He implored them to elect Mrs. Caraway; and in one week Mrs. Caraway went from unassuming underdog to elected official. Long's power in the South was measurable and forceful.

It was not just the agrarian South that bowed to Huey but farm-folk everywhere. Across the country, farmers stood behind and before the Louisiana Senator. The agrarian mainstay state of Iowa held a certain appreciation for Long and his agrarian roots and pauper principles. In the Spring of 1935, Long made a trip to Iowa and witnessed firsthand his popularity within the state. The *Times* documented, "Senator of Huey. P Long of Louisiana denounced the Democratic administration, and especially its agricultural program, before a crowd of 10,000 farmers at the State Fair Grounds here today. Followers...stamped their approval and cried 'amens' to his remarks."<sup>37</sup> Following his speech and popular approval, the Iowa House of Representatives passed a resolution inviting Long to appear and speak before them—Long modestly declined this summons.

Though some agrarian states supported Long, others, that had begun to see positive effects of the New Deal programs, stood by FDR. On the same Spring 1935 tour as his visit to Iowa, Long paid a visit to the University of South Carolina, where he was greeted with signs taunting, "Too Much Hooey." Students and South Carolinian FDR supporters then booed him off the stage, not wishing to hear Long's "Share Our Wealth" speech.<sup>38</sup> Long could not spark interest in all agrarian states, and the Democratic stronghold of South Carolina proved Huey, though a national character, was still a social and political radical.

While his revolutionary nature and plan won him many enemies, Huey felt at home amongst fellow radicals. Long used the fire stirred up by radical speakers, preachers, and politicians to win over fans of progressive personalities across the nation. Long won a particular following in the urban center of Detroit, where radio personality Father Coughlin had dominated the airwaves since the set-in of the Great Depression. Critic Norton McGiffin documented the connection between Long followers and Detroit-based Coughlin listeners, "There is a bond of kinship, there, which may be made manifest in 1936 when the unemployed automobile workers of Detroit will, perchance, tune in on the radio sets which have not yet been repossessed, and hear the Canadian-born spiritual confessor of the ether waves confer an ecclesiastical blessing upon the Dixie politician."<sup>39</sup>

In the progressive political state of California Huey Long found similar support. Riding on the coattails of radical politicians and programs like Upton Sinclair's EPIC (Elimination of Poverty in California) and Townsend's Old Age Pension Plan, Huey Long established a sizeable and active following. The swell of support stemming from the state did not go unnoticed by local and national officials. California chairman of the Roosevelt-Democratic organization, Williams Jennings Bryan Jr. stated, "I have been astounded to learn the extent of the organizational work being carried on by the

<sup>36</sup> Norton McGiffin, "The Long Way to Atlantis," *The North American Review*, Vol. 240, No.1 (June, 1935), 108

<sup>37</sup> Staff, "Nation Mortgaged Long Tells Iowans," *The New York Times*, April 28, 1935, 1

<sup>38</sup> Staff, "'Too Much Hooey' Greets Huey Long," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1935, 32

<sup>39</sup> McGiffin, "The Long Way to Atlantis," 113

Huey Long forces in California. It has gained such momentum that I feel it is another serious factor in the California situation, which was already complicated enough."<sup>40</sup>

McGiffin predicted further appeal to radical and FDR-dissenting groups, "Admittedly Huey must appeal to the radical element of the Northwest, and to the industrial workers of the urban areas...Will the Farmer-Laborites of Minnesota, The Progressives of Wisconsin, make common cause with a man whom honest Socialists distrust as a mountebank and demagogue of the lowest political order? None can now say."<sup>41</sup> Huey also won support of other northerners as early as 1932, while on the presidential campaign-trail of his now political rival, FDR<sup>42</sup>

Long's tour around the country, on which he personally disseminated his call for the establishment of local "Share Our Wealth" Societies certainly won him the attention of many Americans. One man that Long's calls certainly did not escape was the President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In 1935, FDR decided the Long scare had gone on long enough—he commissioned a nation-wide poll in order to see just how strong the *Kingfish* had grown.

### Emil Hurja's Secret Poll

By April of 1935, the White House decided they had sat back long enough, FDR and his advisors had watched Huey Long project his message and find attentive ears; now, they wanted to know how many had followed Long's call. By the Spring of '35 Huey Long boasted 27,000 "Share Our Wealth" clubs with over 7 million members.<sup>43</sup> Now the FDR Administration would calculate their own figures. However, they would not boast or publicize these numbers, as did the *Kingfish*; their numbers would come via a "Secret Poll."

Emil Hurja, an executive director of the Democratic National Committee and a forerunner in the development of polling techniques was employed to plan and conduct FDR's "Secret Poll." Hurja sent out the questionnaire to over 150,000 people in the U.S.—aiming to assess a cross section of the American public.<sup>44</sup> The poll asked its recipients choice for president if the election were held today. The choices included FDR, an unnamed Republican candidate, or the *Kingfish*, Huey Long. The mere conduction of this poll shows the FDR Administrations deep concern over Huey and his effect on the Presidential Election of 1936—the Long problem was real.

The primary method of conducting the poll manifested as straw ballots. These mail-outs claimed to be sent by *The National Inquirer*, a non-existent magazine. The "Secret Ballots" were, in fact, sent by James Farley, at once both chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Postmaster General, subsidized by the government and not at all a private probe of the American people. It is no wonder, Farley's compliance with this "Secret Ballot" as Huey Long had been verbally attacking Farley for months, "It is the opinion of some members of the Senate that if Senator Huey Long continues his almost daily attack upon Mr. James Farley...he will 'get him' in the

<sup>40</sup> William Jennings Brian Jr. to Farley, March 18, 1935, FDR Library collections

<sup>41</sup> McGiffin, "The Long Way to Atlantis," 112

<sup>42</sup> Carter, "How Come Huey Long," 15

<sup>43</sup> Amenta, "Stolen Thunder?," 687

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 287

\* not to be confused with *The National Enquirer*

end."<sup>45</sup> Farley happily allotted the 2¢ per ballot in order to test the strength of the man who planned to "get him." FDR and Farley afraid, Hurja's "Secret Poll" would test the public's acceptance of Long and his ability to challenge FDR in the election of 1936.

*"The Voice of the People Is the Government"*

**The National Inquirer**  
Washington, D. C.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

April 30, 1935

Dear Voter:

Who would be your choice -- if a President of the United States were being elected today:

Franklin D. Roosevelt?  
A Republican Candidate?  
Huey P. Long? or,  
Another Candidate?

A SECRET BALLOT is enclosed for your personal use. It involves no obligations or conditions. Not even a postage stamp is needed. Just mark the ballot and mail it in the nearest mail box.

Never before has the United States been faced with so many serious and complex problems -- which directly affect your welfare. For instance, do you think the New Deal should stay? Or should we return to the Old Deal? Do you favor a 'Share-The-Wealth' program? Should the nation engage in a large Public Works program? Or should Relief and 'the dole' be supported by private funds? Should we return to the 'gold standard' -- or not? Should business and industry be given a freer hand? Your answer to these and many other pressing questions would have to be decided by you in voting for a President today.

This nation-wide poll -- for which your Secret Ballot is enclosed -- is designed to get an accurate cross-section of just what the voters are thinking today. Such polls in the past have been regarded as indexes of the public's political desires. The results of this poll should tell you and the lawmakers just what the voters want now.

Don't lose this ballot as requests for a duplicate cannot be answered.

Just mark and mail your enclosed secret ballot at once. No stamp is required on it. You entail no obligation whatever. Remember "The Voice of the People Is the Government."

Very truly yours,

*The National Inquirer*

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<sup>45</sup> Frank R. Kent, "The Great Game of Politics," *New York Times*, February 27, 1935, 2



The results from Hurja's "Secret Poll" indicated that although his support was not strong enough to win him the election as a third party candidate, Long was dangerously close to handing the Republican party the election. Long's popularity did, in fact, extend far beyond the swamps and swards of the South. Long was a national threat, and could indeed turn many states over to Republican control. The poll predicted that Long could receive more than 2.7 million votes, running on a third party ticket.<sup>47</sup>

Table 1. Hurja's Shift Analysis of the Polling Data: Respondents to the "White" Ballots, 1935

State	Percentage Respondents for:			Electoral Votes:	
	Roosevelt	Republican	Long	Roosevelt	Republican
South Carolina	90.20	3.40	6.40	8	—
Mississippi	85.16	4.39	10.45	9	—
Georgia	85.12	13.96	.92	12	—
Alabama	82.03	13.59	4.37	11	—
Texas	77.54	15.14	7.32	23	—
Arkansas	74.58	13.68	11.74	9	—
Louisiana	57.72	6.17	36.11	10	—
North Carolina	69.41	24.16	6.42	13	—
Arizona	70.39	25.42	4.19	3	—
Nevada	61.45	19.28	19.28	3	—
Oklahoma	65.66	25.93	8.41	11	—
Tennessee	65.35	30.62	4.03	11	—
Florida	60.62	29.41	9.97	7	—
Virginia	62.53	31.41	6.05	11	—
Utah	58.84	29.60	11.56	4	—
South Dakota	58.41	30.86	10.73	4	—
North Dakota	59.16	33.55	7.29	4	—
Oregon	56.23	34.05	9.72	5	—
New Mexico	57.00	38.78	4.22	3	—
Kansas	55.94	38.00	6.06	9	—
Wisconsin	54.07	36.52	9.40	12	—
Nebraska	54.63	38.65	6.72	7	—
Missouri	53.64	38.21	8.15	15	—
Kentucky	54.65	39.49	5.85	11	—
California	53.60	38.73	7.68	22	—
Montana	54.89	41.57	3.54	4	—
Idaho	52.32	41.34	6.34	4	—
Wyoming	49.89	39.04	11.06	3	—
Washington	47.44	39.01	13.55	8	—
Minnesota	48.42	41.78	9.80	11	—
Maryland	47.66	41.94	10.39	8	—
Iowa	45.84	42.20	11.95	11	—
Michigan	46.63	45.90	7.47	19	—
Indiana	46.58	47.54	5.88	—	14
Colorado	43.43	44.39	12.19	—	6
New York	45.92	49.12	4.96	—	47
Illinois	44.30	48.85	6.85	—	29
West Virginia	45.08	50.08	4.84	—	8
Ohio	40.96	48.89	10.15	—	26
New Jersey	41.90	51.58	6.51	—	16
Rhode Island	42.59	52.73	4.68	—	4
Pennsylvania	40.82	53.24	5.95	—	36
Connecticut	41.32	55.35	3.33	—	8
Maine	38.78	59.63	1.58	—	5
New Hampshire	37.06	58.30	4.64	—	4
Massachusetts	35.32	57.43	7.25	—	17
Vermont	35.31	57.76	6.93	—	3
Delaware	35.49	60.11	4.40	—	3
Totals	49.29	42.54	7.37	305	226

<sup>46</sup> Amenta, "Stolen Thunder?," 688

<sup>47</sup> Snyder, "Huey Long and the Presidential Election of 1936," 131-132

The poll indicated that the South was strongly behind Huey. It showed that Long did, indeed, appeal to the radicals of the Northwest, showing strong returns in Washington, Oregon, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. The numbers also suggested that Long's trip to Iowa had won him many supporters. It proved his days campaigning for FDR in South Dakota had won him long-lasting popularity. The poll also pointed to the fact that Depression relief-recipients were far more likely to support Long.<sup>48</sup> Long's reach was far and wide; and though he lagged greatly behind both FDR and Republicans in terms of overall votes, he might hold the balance of power in the 1936 election.<sup>49</sup> Although this poll was kept secret, Long was publicly known to be a real threat to FDR. "Long is regarded by many as being a formidable candidate for election in 1936, and some politicians are so engrossed with this belief that they think something must be done about it."<sup>50</sup>

### Long's Scare and FDR's Response

Though Huey Long's polling percentages hovered around 10% from state-to-state, he may have held the balance of power for the 1936 Presidential Election in his hands; and Long's drive and appeal should not be underestimated.<sup>51</sup> His platform, exposure, "Share Our Wealth" Societies, and national reception as shown by Hurja's poll all point to Long's strong desire to implement his plan and flex his power. However just as his ambition won him supporters it also won him critics. Norton McGiffin wrote, "[Long] is the man who would be king of a new political dynasty which would climb to power over the broad backs of the men with the hoes and the picks and the shovels, the submerged and underprivileged segment of America's voting population which is not yet aware of its strength."<sup>52</sup> While these critics derided Long's techniques, they respected his power—McGiffin predicted Long could win up to 5 million votes in the 1936 Presidential election, enough to turn the tables on FDR.<sup>53 54</sup>

FDR understood this and in 1935 began what has become known as his "Second Hundred Days," in which he and Congress established more of his "Alphabet Soup" acronymmed programs and even established a "soak-the-rich" tax bill—one that paled in comparison to the proposed tax hikes of Huey Long; but still one which greatly exceeded prior tax rates on the rich. Following Hurja's "Secret Poll" this "Second New Deal" can be understood as a direct response of the threat of Long and his popular "Share Our Wealth" platform. FDR's Second New Deal policies such as: Works Projects Administration, Social Security Act, Banking Act, and United States Housing Authority were adopted in order to undermine support for Huey Long by winning back Huey supporters looking for a more active and radical federal response to the hardships of the New Deal.

Fortunately for FDR, Huey Long would not live to challenge him in the 1936 Presidential Election. At the height of his popularity, On September 8, 1935 Huey Long

<sup>48</sup> Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, p 286

<sup>49</sup> see Figure 1

<sup>50</sup> Staff, "Beating Huey to It," *Chicago Packer*, June 8, 1935, 22

<sup>51</sup> Amenta, "Stolen Thunder?," 678

<sup>52</sup> McGiffin, "The Long Way to Atlantis," 106

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 109

<sup>54</sup> Snyder, "Huey Long and the Election of 1936," 141

was assassinated in the Louisiana Capital building by the son-in-law of a local slighted judge. Despite its strength across the country, Huey's "Share Our Wealth" Society and clubs, for the most part, died with him. The foremost political rival of Roosevelt on the left died and would not be replaced. The death of Huey marked the end of the threat for a presidential upset. The widely read *Collier's* gave credence to the death of the threat to FDR, "On your way home...Ask almost any Senator. To a lot of these gents the murder of Huey Long must have been like lifting the mortgage on the old homestead. Ask President Roosevelt."<sup>55</sup>

Huey Long's death compromised his "Share Our Wealth" movement that may have come to truly challenge FDR in the 1936 Presidential Election. It prevented any real conclusion as to the question of Long's national strength. Though there was never any real test of Long's power as a third-party candidate for president, there is no doubt that he had immense appeal to the nation, its voters, and its Depression victims. Long represented an alternative view, a radical movement, and no doubt a minority position; however, the *Kingfish* gave hope to more than a few across the nation. He gave hope to farmers in Iowa, students in Washington, elderly in California, industrial workers in Detroit. He provided real change for Louisianans over whom he ruled as both Governor and Senator—change he wished to bring to the entire nation. It was not to be. Long and his message were gunned down before they had a chance to represent a Depression-ridden America. America will never know the effect Huey Long might have had, had he lived. Perhaps, this is why he has captured the imaginations of so many historians, politicians and radicals.

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## Occupy Wall Street

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Over seventy-five years after the assassination of Huey Long and the demise of his "Share Our Wealth" Society, a populist movement arguing for Long-like radical wealth redistribution emerged in Lower Manhattan. Inspired by the peaceful revolution in a number of Middle-Eastern countries during the Spring of 2011, Canadian activist organization, Adbusters, issued a call-to-action via its blog on July 13, 2011.

Alright you 90,000 redeemers rebels and radicals out there, a worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics is underway right now that bodes well for the future...On September 17, we want to see 20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices...It's time for DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY, we're doomed without it.<sup>56</sup>

On September 17<sup>th</sup> there were not twenty thousand people to occupy Wall Street. There were not ten thousand or five thousand. According to the *New York Times* day-of *City Room* coverage, only several hundred protesters answered Adbusters call.<sup>57</sup> However, many of those who come to occupy made their home in Zuccotti Park, a

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<sup>55</sup> Walter Davenport, "The Robes of the Kingfish," *Collier's*, XCVI (November 23, 1935), 33

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>

<sup>57</sup> Colin Moynahan, "Protesters Find Wall Street Off Limits," *New York Times*, September 18, 2011, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F01E7D91F3CF93BA2575AC0A9679D8B63>

privately owned park that is open to the public. Here protesters remained and grew, coming to call themselves and their movement "Occupy Wall Street" (OWS). The Fall of 2011 saw a swelling of protesters, as occupiers remained, establishing a tent-city complete with a kitchen, a library, a comfort station, a sign-making station, and dedicated sleeping quarters.

As the occupation grew, so did protesters' number of demands. Occupy's message had evolved from the single-issue "Democracy Not Corporatocracy" proposal by Adbusters to a multi-faceted political, social, and economic protest. Just as Occupy's membership had grown, so had its scope. Its list of qualms, though diverse, centered primarily on the inequality produced by the uneven distribution of wealth within America.

As Occupy Wall Street expanded to fill Zuccotti Park's borders, enclosed by NYPD barricades only days after original encampment, Occupy camps arose across the country, reaching over 100 encampments within one month of the September 17<sup>th</sup> initial day-of-action.<sup>58</sup> Across the country encampments arose decrying economic, social, and political inequality. Occupy camps chanted collectively, "We are the 99%!" They lamented government subsidies and bailouts for corporations and banks that suffered in the 2008-2009 recession crying, "Banks got bailed out! We got sold out!" Occupiers took pride in their vocality and their experiment with direct democracy, simultaneously condemning the state of the American political system and crowing their own democratic experiment a success. They call and responded, "Show me what a democracy looks like! This is what a democracy looks like!"

In its first 7 months of existence, Occupy has been careful to be as inclusive as possible, welcoming anyone and everyone to the movement, no matter the individual's status or beliefs. As an experiment with direct democracy, Occupy resists any one person or body acting as a representative of the whole movement. Occupy views the grievances and qualms of every person equally. On September 29<sup>th</sup>, Occupy drafted what can be thought of as its formative document. The Aptly named, "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City" was formed and accepted at the Zuccotti Park based General Assembly, in which each individual in attendance has an equal say and equal opportunity to speak. This document manifested itself as a list of qualms, troubles, and inequalities. This list openly admits that it is not all-inclusive, but stands as perhaps the Occupy's greatest testament.

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our

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<sup>58</sup> Probably the most accurate source of encampments and local news articles relating to encampments has been amassed through Wikipedia. Its [List of Occupy movement protest locations in the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Occupy_movement_protest_locations_in_the_United_States) article contains over 300 sources and hyperlinks to reliable local media sources. Accessed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Occupy\\_movement\\_protest\\_locations\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Occupy_movement_protest_locations_in_the_United_States)

governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

- They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.
- They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.
- They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.
- They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices.
- They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.
- They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.
- They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers' healthcare and pay.
- They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.
- They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.
- They have sold our privacy as a commodity.
- They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.
- They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.
- They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.
- They have donated large sums of money to politicians, who are responsible for regulating them.
- They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.
- They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people's lives or provide relief in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantial profit.
- They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.
- They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.
- They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.
- They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.
- They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.
- They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.\*

To the people of the world,

We, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy, we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!<sup>59</sup>,<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> General Assembly of Occupy Wall Street, "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City, accessed at: <http://www.nycga.net/resources/declaration/>

<sup>60</sup> a more interactive representation of the Declaration can be found on <http://www.nycga.net/resources/declaration/>

Because of the concern with consensus and equality, it is difficult to write about Occupy without omitting some grievances, demands, issues, or beliefs of the movement. Each member constitutes a totally equal voice and viewpoint within the movement; and, as such, generalizations have no place in writing on OWS. Further the thoroughness required to completely represent the movement makes the task nearly impossible. However, as a member of Occupy since the first weeks of its establishment in Zuccotti Park, I can speak for myself, my understanding of the movement, and my hopes in its advancement.

From the time of Occupy Wall Street's original "taking" of Zuccotti Park until the movement was forcibly removed through mayoral dictum and brutal NYPD violence, the protest existed as a constant presence in New York's Financial District. Attempting to emulate the Egyptian revolution, Occupy dubbed itself a "Tahrir movement,"<sup>61</sup> standing as a constant presence and reminder of economic injustice and inequality.<sup>62</sup> The grassroots group that established their camp at Zuccotti Park (renamed Liberty Plaza by the occupiers) stood in direct juxtaposition to the so-called economic 1%ers. National banks, office skyscrapers, and the New York Stock Exchange surrounded the meek camp populated by students, union members, and community organizers. This group of protestors survived not on millions of dollars, like many businessmen that walked past Liberty Plaza on their way to work, but on donated food, borrowed clothing, and makeshift beds and tents. It was arguably here in New York's Financial District where the gap between rich and poor could be made most evident.

Occupy existed not simply as a movement calling for action but as an example of the ravages of unbridled capitalism and radically unequal distribution of wealth in America. With new occupiers arriving daily, Liberty Plaza transformed from a campsite to a camp-commune. As Zuccotti swelled with citizenry, national support for Occupy's issues increased as well; the movement was no doubt raising public awareness of American economic injustice. According to a November 2011 Gallup poll, 25% of Americans approved of Occupy Wall Street's goals as opposed to 16% of people who disapproved (59% did not know).<sup>63</sup> And while the same poll showed increased disapproval of Occupy's occupation tactics (as compared to October of 2011), Occupy's message had struck a chord with the American public.

A sizeable portion American public, still suffering from the Recession of 2008-2009, felt itself a part of the 99% even if they, themselves, did not picket or protest on Wall Street. A month after the original occupation, *The New Yorker* published its first comment on Occupy Wall Street, in which it recognized OWS as a movement that had already affected American perception and might actually effect political change.

Occupy Wall Street is a political project, but it is equally a *cri de coeur*, an exercise in constructive group dynamics, a release from isolation, resignation, and futility. The process, not the platform, is the point. Anyway, OWES is not the Brookings Institution. But its implicit grievances are plain enough: the mass pain of mass unemployment, underemployment, and economic insecurity; the corrupting, pervasive political influence of big money; the outrageous, rapidly growing inequality of wealth and income; the impunity of the financial-industry scammers whose greed and fraud precipitated the

<sup>61</sup> named after Cairo's Tahrir Square

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>

<sup>63</sup> Lydia Saad, "Support for "Occupy" Unchanged, but More Criticize Approach," November 21, 2011, accessed at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/150896/support-occupy-unchanged-criticize-approach.aspx>

*Fordham*

worst economic crisis since the Great Depression; a broken political system hobbled by a Republican right willing and usually able to block any measures, however timid and partial, that might relieve the suffering. If Occupy Wall Street can continue to behave with nonviolent restraint, if it can avoid hijack by a flaky fringe, if it can shake the center-left out of its funk, if it can embolden Democratic politicians (very much including President Obama, who, lately and belatedly, has begun to show signs of fight), then preoccupied Main Street will truly owe OWES. Big ifs all. It's too early to tell, but not too late to hope.<sup>64</sup>

It was not just *The New Yorker* and the American public that took notice of Occupy but also politicians and policemen. On November 15, 2011, at the behest of Mayor Bloomberg and the brutal hands of the NYPD, Occupy Wall Street was evicted from their Zuccotti Park home—within a few weeks dozens of other encampments, country-wide, joined the ranks of homeless occupiers. The eponymous strategy of Occupy came to an end at the hands of elected officials and their charged police forces.<sup>65</sup>

Since its eviction, Occupy has stagnated. It's message and example is no longer so visible, so apparent, so obvious. The threat Occupy posed no longer seems so impending. Occupy has all but disappeared from the public eye. Since November 15<sup>th</sup> Occupy has been grounded. It no longer demands American consciousness of economic inequality. It no longer embodies as great a threat to corporations and politicians. Most importantly, Occupy ceases to affect political or social thought in America. For this reason Occupy Wall Street must reassess, its methods, its message, and its goals.

### Occupy Moving Forward

Though its encampments are gone the memory of Occupy Wall Street remains vivid in the minds of city officials, politicians, and policymakers across the country. Occupy provided the most visible and vocal populist protest of economic equality since Long and his "Share Our Wealth" Program. Before the evictions, Occupy encampments acted as breeding grounds for economic discontentedness, radical thought and political protest. They stood as a visible threat to the economic, political, and social status quo, which saw increasingly more money in the hands of a few, unlimited corporate influence on election outcomes, and a growing disregard of human dignity.<sup>66</sup>

After the countrywide evictions of Occupy encampments, the movement has largely slipped back into the collective American subconscious. No longer does the "Occupy Wall Street" discussion dominate the political mainstream media; and while members of the movement have been diligent to continue their push for economic justice via social media, Occupy no longer offers as loud a commentary on economic and political injustice. As a result of forceful evictions and inhospitable weather, Occupy movements across the country were largely inactive throughout the Winter of 2012. Surviving through planned "days-of-action," Occupy Wall Street has been able to maintain some semblance of its original form; however, these "days-of-action" fail to provide the pressure of the original Occupy encampments. In order to, once again, instill fear in the politicians and corporations that have everything to lose, Occupy must

<sup>64</sup> Hendrik Hertzberg, "A Walk In The Park," *The New Yorker*, October 17, accessed at: [http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2011/10/17/111017taco\\_talk\\_hertzberg](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2011/10/17/111017taco_talk_hertzberg)

<sup>65</sup> James Barron and Colin Moynihan, "City Reopens Park After Protesters Are Evicted," *New York Times*, November 15, 2011, accessed at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/16/nyregion/police-begin-clearing-zuccotti-park-of-protesters.html?pagewanted=all#>

<sup>66</sup> Declaration of Occupation of New York City

reassess its tactics. It must look to the populist precedent of Huey Long and his "Share Our Wealth" Societies.

Occupy achieved mild success in its initial existence as a "Tahrir movement" of active encampments that stretched across the country. When asked in a media address his take on Occupy Wall Street, President Barack Obama responded, "We had the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression - huge collateral damage throughout the country, all across main street. And yet, you are still seeing some of the same folks who acted irresponsibly trying to crack down on abusive practices that got us in the situation in the first place. I think people are frustrated."<sup>67</sup> Occupy demanded attention from the President of the United States. Months after the Occupy evictions, Barack Obama decried unjust and immoral actions of Wall Street and called for the establishment of the "Buffet Rule"<sup>68</sup> of taxation in his State of the Union Address.<sup>69</sup>

Though such presidential pronouncements must be commended, such mild response to the radical message and actions of Occupy Wall Street pails in comparison to the kind of change effected by Huey Long and his "Share Our Wealth" Societies. As argued earlier, Huey Long's radical message and support was the greatest impetus behind FDR's Second New Deal. The *Kingfish's* demonstrative call for wealth-redistribution and provision of the poor saw to some of the most progressive social programs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The threat Huey Long posed to FDR in the election of 1936 forced Franklin to adopt more progressive policy lest the left leave his side for Huey's.

Many have drawn similarities between the Great Depression and the current economic crisis dubbed, by many, the "Great Recession," yet none so far has attempted to argue, thoroughly, the similarities between the message of Huey Long and Occupy Wall Street. Similarities abound. Both argued for wealth-redistribution as the staple of their argument. Both maintain that there ought be provision for the poor, free education for all, and government oversight of corporations.<sup>70</sup> Huey's "Share Our Wealth" Platform is one in the same as Occupy Wall Street's Declaration of Occupation; and while Occupy Wall Street claims to have no official platform, they have been arguing Huey's "Share Our Wealth, Every Man A King" Platform since the beginning. Huey's message has been repeated and argued at General Assembly after General Assembly—The rich have too much, the poor too little. Huey's famed "Share Our Wealth Speech" ought resonate with occupiers just as it did with Depression victims.<sup>71</sup>

Occupy has thus far worked outside the political arena, fearing representative government and the inequalities which necessarily exist within such a system; however, Occupy dooms itself to one of two outcomes by doing this. Either Occupy Wall Street will attempt to overthrow the entire two-hundred year old American economic and political system, or Occupy Wall Street will continue to exist as a small and limited Utopian experiment. Occupy will either stage political revolution, or attempt to establish more Liberty Plaza-like communes across the nation. These are the only two

<sup>67</sup> [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544\\_162-20116707-503544.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20116707-503544.html)

<sup>68</sup> see Warren E. Buffet, "Stop Coddling the Super-Rich," *New York Times*, August 14, 2011, accessed at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/15/opinion/stop-coddling-the-super-rich.html?>

<sup>69</sup> Barack Obama, "State of The Union Address 2012: An America Built to Last," January 24, 2012, accessed at [http://www.c-span.org/uploadedFiles/Content/The\\_Administration/State\\_of\\_the\\_Union/SOTU-2012.pdf](http://www.c-span.org/uploadedFiles/Content/The_Administration/State_of_the_Union/SOTU-2012.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Long spent much of his political career battling Standard Oil, demanding corporate responsibility, livable wages, and higher tax rates on their exorbitant profits

<sup>71</sup> a transcript of this famed speech, repeated on the radio and in Congress alike during Huey Long's reign can be found at: <http://www.ssa.gov/history/longsen.html>



options Occupy leaves itself if it is to continue to abide by its anti-representative extrapolitical tenets.

I hope for my sake and for the American peoples sake that Occupy reassesses its tactics and abandons its super-skeptic view of American representative democracy. In order to effect the kind of radical progressive change realized in the Second New Deal, pressure must be placed on the left, currently embodied by President Barack Obama. America's current situation is eerily similar to the Great Depression. Across the country, the poor are suffering, houses are being seized, banks have failed (though this time around they were bailed out by the American Government), and 1% profiteering is largely to blame.

All the pieces are in place for a Third New Deal. A Progressive Democrat seeks reelection to the Presidency. A Republican victory would mean crippling economic, social, and political regress. And an ambitious radical group seeks significant wealth-redistribution. This group needs only a *Kingfish* to personify its message, provide a direct challenge to the Democrats, and win the American people political and economic equality.

Soon after the assassination of Long, the "Share Our Wealth" Society died without its head. Occupy Wall Street, since its inception, has had no head: This headless mass has run around erratic, undirected, and sometimes messageless. In order to achieve any success or effect any significant policy change, Occupy must enter the political arena. They must ordain someone as their *Kingfish* to disseminate their ideas and grievances to the American people. They must direct their action towards Barack Obama, placing him in the same uncomfortable squeeze as FDR before the election for 1936. Occupy need not win any election. There need never be any elected Occupy official; however, there must at least exist the threat of one.

As the Summer of 2012 approaches and the impending presidential election is at hand, the time has come for Occupy Wall Street to decide what kind of movement it will become. Will it continue to exist as a stagnating social media movement? Will it attempt reestablish its encampments, risking further evictions? Will it call for truly radical revolution? Or will it heed history and turn to example of Huey Long? Will Occupy Wall Street, once again, take to the streets this time singing the famed song of Long?

More ideal  
2016  
than now!

Why weep or slumber America?  
Land of the brave and true  
With castles, clothing and food for all,  
All belongs to you.  
Ev'ry man a king; ev'ry man a king;  
For you can be a millionaire.  
But there's something belonging to others,  
There's enough for all people to share.  
When it's sunny June or December too,  
Or in the Winter time or Spring,  
There'll be peace without end  
Ev'ry neighbor a friend,  
With ev'ry man a king

--Huey Long<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Staff, "Every Man a King' Drive By Long Is On," 6

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