

Our Plundering Government

Speech Delivered

by

U. S. SENATOR HUEY P. LONG

of Louisiana

Over the network of radio stations of the National Broadcasting Co. from Washington, D. C.

Sunday, February 10, 1935

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The introduction which my friend has given me is not quite complete. I wanted it to be more or less complete—that I am still in the Democratic Party; so I am going to reintroduce myself to this audience, hoping that you will believe that I am even a better Democrat than I was here three or four years ago. In fact, I believe you already know that. I am Huey P. Long. I am now a United States Senator. I am also National Democratic Committeeman from the State of Louisiana; I am also the Chairman of the Louisiana State Democratic Central Committee, and I am also the head of the Louisiana Democratic majority organization, as well as being a member of the National Democratic party councils. And I intend to make you a speech along the lines of Democratic government for the few minutes that have been assigned me by the Columbia Broadcasting System.

This being a Sunday night, it would be better that I perhaps stay within the confines of the scriptures as much as I can, so I will read from Proverbs, Chapter 30, Verses 7 to 9, as follows:

"Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:

"Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

"Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

That ends the quotation from Proverbs, written by Solomon, the wisest of all men. I am not going to reread, but I want to restate for fear some may not have grasped the entire significance of that little phrase that I have read, I will restate the theory.

"Give me neither riches nor poverty," says the Scriptures, "Lest I be vain and say, Who is the Lord, or if I be poor, I become a thief."

The Bible takes it as axiomatic that one is as evil as the other. That is, that an extremely rich man is as evil as an extremely poor man, and the Bible takes it as axiomatic that the extremely rich man must, by nature of the thing, be an evil man; and the poor man must, by the nature of the thing, be in the direction of a thief. Now that is the Bible. Maybe you don't think so. Wait a minute, I will give you a little more. St. Matthew, Chapter 19, Verses 23 and 24:

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:

"And again I say unto you it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

Of course, many people have been trying to tell you that that Biblical commandment meant something else; they have been trying to tell you that it didn't mean a needle, but some hole in the wall; but when you go back up and read Proverbs and then read St. Matthew, you have quite some little difficulty in saying anything except what the Bible said it means; that is, that it is practically impossible for a rich man to enter heaven; but if you have any doubt about it, let me read you something else. I read you from

the Book of James, Chapter 5. That is in the New Testament:

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you."

That will be found in the 5th Chapter of the Book of James. Following along those lines, it says:

"Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth:

"Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

"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."

So, then, ladies and gentlemen, while I am not presuming to preach you any sermon, I am only undertaking to establish (and I can cite you a hundred other quotations equally as cogent), I am only seeking to establish that extreme poverty is looked upon by the Bible as the substance to make a man a thief, and extreme riches is looked upon by the Bible to make a man just as bad. And so said Solomon, and so says the various other provisions of the Scriptures.

Riches or poverty make of a man just the exact opposite of what is intended by the Bible, and by the Lord. You will find, my friends, that God knew, and that we ought to know, that no one can have very much more than he needs without depriving someone else of what he must have to live. But if very rich people we must have, then naturally we must have very poor people. To have very rich people, we have to have very poor people. The whole thing is a see-saw; when one set of our people go high up in the air, the common people must come way down, and if the side of the see-saw on which the rich people sit is pushed up too high, the other side must carry us down in the ground. So has America's see-saw worked, that the very rich have gone so high, that the very poor are going down into their graves.

But there could be a see-saw on a near an even level, where we could go up and down, but never so low as to wreck us. That is the kind of a see-saw we want. Not exactly a level for everybody, but don't have one man so high that he must of necessity crowd another man to his grave.

God said none too rich; none too poor. For, said the Lord, the rich will defy the Lord and the poor will become a thief. "Feed all with food convenient to them."

I happened at one time to be Governor of the State of Louisiana—from 1928 to 1932. When I became governor of that state, we had 1500 men in the penitentiary. During the depression times that I served as governor, that 1500 men grew to 3000 men in the penitentiary—double the enrollment in the penitentiary in four years. Now I don't think I had inculcated into the population that kind of a disposition, that there would be twice as many convicts in the penitentiary in those two or three years' time as prior to my time as governor. So I undertook to look into the matter and find the reason. The days of the depression only tended to make people criminals, I found.

Now, my friends, I am going to skip just a little

bit of what I had intended to say tonight, to get to the cold facts as to what is responsible for conditions, and the correctives which I am going to apply. Speaking over this broadcast tonight from coast to coast, I notice I have a large number of Eastern stations. I didn't know that, when I came here, so therefore, some of the manuscript which I had prepared will be discarded, because I am particularly anxious that I may be permitted to reach into this eastern territory and to say some of the things I have often wanted to be heard by the people living in the eastern states. I am going to read you from Theognis, one of the great Greeks. I am going to read you from him for this reason, that I am not unmindful that many people think the Scriptures is a worn out book. It is not, but there are some people who don't accept the Bible and say some men are smarter than the Scriptures, and they particularly point to the philosophers of ancient Greece, and among those most often referred to are such men as Socrates, Plato and Theognis.

I suppose Plato is looked upon as being probably the greatest,—Theognis probably the next. I am going to read you from Theognis, one of the Greek philosophers, then I will read you from Plato. Said this great Greek philosopher in these words:

"Fulness (plenty) hath ere now destroyed far more men, look you, than famine, to wit, as many as were desirous of having more than their share."

Also a little later on, if you care to have me read, I will give you what Plato said along the same lines. Here is what Plato said:

"The citizen (of this ideal republic) must indeed be happy and good, and the legislator will seek to make him so; but very rich and very good at the same time he cannot be."

In other words, said Plato, long before the birth of Jesus Christ, it is impossible for a man to be very rich and very good at the same time. Now you may think that it is a different proposition in America. Well, ladies and gentlemen, there never were fortunes made in any country through as many tactics of brigandages and through as many crimes and demeanors of men in his position as the American fortunes. I am not going to undertake to defame those men, but I can take you any fortune you wish to write me about and show you it has not been amassed by any tactics other than by force and crimes. I can take you the Morgan fortune; the Rockefeller fortune, or the Mellon fortune, or any fortune you wish to inquire about. The Rockefellers broke every railroad rate and every railroad law ever put on the books before they got them. They sent more men to their graves than all of the bandits in Chicago can kill if they lived to be one thousand years old apiece.

The Morgan fortune was started by J. P. Morgan, Jr., who was the father of the J. P. Morgan of today, selling some refused carbines to Fremont's army. Many other things might be declared responsible for the Morgan fortune. The Bosco fiasco in South and Central America is sufficient to condemn the Mellon fortune, but just let us say they were all properly and well acquired. Leave it at that; however they were acquired you cannot get away from the Scriptures or the philosophers who say that it is impossible for a man to be very good and very rich at the same time.

Now, maybe then you don't believe the Greek philosophers, or maybe then you don't believe the Scriptures either. Then I will not ask you to believe anything very difficult; I am not going to ask you to believe fractions. I will only ask you to believe the simple tables of arithmetic—and if you will concede the principles of the four elementary problems of arithmetic,—addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, I will have no fault with you tonight, but before going into that, let me give you another succinct proof as to whether or not this country

was properly founded and whether or not it is still being steered on the course it was originally intended.

I am going to read to you from the covenant of the Pilgrims. You have talked about the Pilgrim Fathers, some of my wise critics, and you have said I am preaching a doctrine contrary to the doctrine of the Pilgrim Fathers on which the country was founded. Well, of course you newspaper people who have written that—not all of you newspapers have written that—but you magazines who have written and you would-be statesmen (and that is about as good as any of us ever get to be, is the class of a would-be statesman), but some of our great statesmen who said I am going so far as to say I am going counter to the covenant of the Pilgrim Fathers—did you ever read the covenant of the Pilgrim Fathers? I know you didn't, and I will read it to you. Here it is. I am now reading from the Bradford History presented by the New England Society in the City of New York to its members: (Pages 56, 57, 58)

"It will be meete I here inserte these conditions, which are as foloweth: (This is the old Pilgrim Contract.) Year 1620, July 1st."

Now I am going to skip to number seven, if you don't mind.

"7. He that shall carie his wife & children, or servants, shall be allowed for everie person now aged 16. years & upward, a single share in ye division, or if he provid them necessaries, a duple share, or if they be between 10. years old and 16., then 2. of them to be reconed for a person, both in transportation and devision."

Just before that, I read you number six.

"6. Whosoever cometh to ye colonie hereafter, or putteth any into ye stock, shall at the ende of ye 7. years be allowed proportionably to ye time of his so doing."

Now I read you five, because I am reading you in inverse order:

"5. That at ye end of ye 7. years, ye capitall & profits, viz. the houses, lands, goods and chatles, be equally divided betwixte ye adventurers, and planters; wch done, every man shall be free from other of them of any debt or detrimente concerning this adventure."

In other words, the Pilgrim Fathers had a contract that they would keep the word of the Lord. The Bible commanded them that at the end of seven years that they ought to remit all debts and they ought to see that the wealth was redistributed, so none would have too much and none would be too poor. And the Pilgrim Fathers who founded the country wrote it into the covenant, not to do what Huey Long said, because I am not advocating an equal division of the wealth every seven years, but they said more than I ever said, in order that they would never have such a thing as concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, that every seven years they would divide up the wealth among all of them equally, and at the end of every seven years they would remit all debts. Now some of you wise men who have been talking about me not minding the faith of the Pilgrim Fathers, go off and read that and weep a little bit more and see what other faith is there that has been unminded by the proposition I have offered in the United States Senate.

My friends, today a young man attending Columbia University came to see me. I knew him in Louisiana and his folks were always friends to me, and they voted for me for every office I ever ran for. He came along today and told me he could not keep up his course at college unless he could borrow \$250. He wanted me to loan him \$250. And I didn't have it to loan to him. And I thought how tragic it was that that young man had to go away and be turned away from Columbia University while undertaking to complete an ordinary course at college, which he had the mental capacity to absorb, while other people have the opportunity by reason of the wealthy condition of

their parents, but don't have the mental capacity to do it.

So I said to this young man, "I am very sorry for you. But," I said, "before you leave I want to give you something." And I gave him the educational program of the Share Our Wealth Society. Let me tell you what that is. We propose if we have the capacity to conscript soldiers and train them year after year, that we will do no conscripting, but that just the same we will train these people in other lines. We propose that education will be taken over as a function of the United States Government and that every girl and boy will be permitted to absorb an education, not only through grammar school and high school, but through colleges and vocational and professional training, and the living costs and school costs and other such costs will be absorbed as a matter of government costs. Now you say where are you going to get the money? Wait a moment. That is not all we propose. We say further we ought to guarantee through our Share Our Wealth program that we will afford to every deserving family in this country, and by deserving we mean every family not in the penitentiary or insane asylum, or even those in the insane asylum for that matter—we say we will guarantee to every deserving family in this country a home and the comforts of a home, and included in such comforts would be such things as a radio and automobile, and such other conveniences and necessities of life.

We would guarantee up to not less than \$5,000, or an average of 1/3 of the average wealth in this country,—to every deserving family to begin with. Then we would reduce the hours of employment to 30 hours a week, maybe less, and eleven months to the year, maybe less. We would reduce employment to such a condition that we would share the work so that people would work only so long as it became necessary to produce the things needed by the people, and that we would reduce the hours so much as would be necessary to have everybody employed, rather than to have one employed too much of the time, and some employed none of the time.

We would include in our program old age pensions to those above 60 years of age of around \$30 to \$40 to the month. Also, ladies and gentlemen, we would undertake to discharge along with that, the bonus that we owe to the soldiers.

Now you want to know where are we going to get the money? We will levy a capital levy tax on all big fortunes in the United States. We will say to a millionaire: "We are not worried about your first million dollars. If you wish to be a millionaire, we will not worry about your first million dollars, and that is more than you can spend during your life time and your children's life time adequately and properly." But we will say if you wish to be a millionaire, we will not be concerned with that, but if you wish to be above a millionaire we will step in for the welfare of the country to a certain point. So we will say to keep your first million dollars. But after you have got more than one million, we charge you 1% on the second million; 2% on the third million; 4% on the fourth million; 8% on the fifth million; 16% on the sixth million; 32% on the seventh million; 64% on the eighth million and 100% on the ninth million; which means that in time that there would be no man in this country that could own more than 2½ to 4 million dollars. And that would be our limit upon the amount that any one man would be permitted to own in this country, and when we have done that, we will throw into the treasury of the United States Government tomorrow 165 billion dollars. And with 100 billion dollars we can give to every family in this country, a home and the comforts of a home, and with the balance of the money we can have an improvement program which will discharge every obligation this country owes to its citizens and continually supply the entire population of America

through employment and other facilities that reducing these fortunes of the big men would give the government the means with which to do so.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is Huey P. Long talking, for the benefit of those who have just tuned in and for the benefit of those who yet remain.

Now let us see here. We have organized Share Our Wealth Societies. Maybe some of you good people here in the East who are listening to me don't believe what I am saying. You don't believe it is possible to have that much money, do you? Well, there is a big financial writer here in this country called Roger W. Babson, hired by Wall Street and the newspapers of Wall Street. Let's see what he says. Mr. Roger Babson says in 1934:

"With intensive production and proper distribution, every family in the country should receive an income of \$10,000 per year, with everybody from 20 to 50 years old working eight months annually."

Now Mr. Babson says that there is \$10,000 a year in earnings. Well, now, let's reduce this financial writer's figures by two and say there is \$5,000, and then let's say we will give \$3,000 of that to the multi-millionaires to spread among their children and things of that kind in years to come, that would still leave an income of not below \$2,000. That would be sufficient, after a man has a home and the comforts of a home, that all might live in respectability.

I am not going to read some other figures to support that, but I have them here and anybody who wants them can write and get them. Mr. Roosevelt has had two men who made this estimate. One of them estimated there would never be less than \$4,370 to the family, and the other estimated there would never be less than \$5,000 to the family. Take any set of figures you want and it is two times as much as I contend to be necessary to carry the entire American population.

Why have this misery and this distress in America? Why have people hungry? Why have people naked for the want of clothes to wear? Why have our people homeless? Why have all these millions of unemployed? We have the food to feed the people. Why let it rot while people starve? We have the clothes and the cotton and wool to make more clothes, and more than anyone will ever need to wear. Why have all of them fall to pieces and mould while people shiver for the lack of them? We have the houses to live in and the material and labor to build more houses to live in. Why have men, women and children crying for a place to rest their heads, while the walls inside the houses fall to ruin for lack of human habitation?

Why? Because Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt has refused to carry out his promise to pull down the size of the big fortunes and to use the money thus taken to end all such things as poverty among the people. With all these many extra things which we have, with this surplus of food, clothes and houses, to let our people go to ruin for the lack of them is a shame on the birth of manhood. The U. S. is like a fool carrying a loaf of bread under his arm and starving to death at the same time. We propose to Share Our Wealth!

What are we going to do about these debts? We have 252 billion dollars of debts, public and private debts. 252 billion dollars! That is \$2,000 to every man, woman and child in the United States in debts. In the days before the war—in the old slave days in the South—a colored man could buy his freedom for \$1,500 or \$2,000, and yet today, ladies and gentlemen, all of the whites and all of the blacks come into this world with \$2,000 of debts as their inheritance. There used to be a time when we carried a silver spoon and a cup or a baby rattle to a baby at the time of his birth. We have changed that. Today we tie a \$2,000 debt around his neck and many are never able to pay it throughout their entire life time.

Europe owes us 11 billion dollars that we can't

collect and we had to excuse Europe. We gave Europe a moratorium of one year and they take a moratorium after that; and we gave them a year and they take the balance of the time. Now if Europe can't pay the 11 billion dollars—and that includes England, France, Russia, Czecho-Slovakia, Jugoslavia, Lithuania and every other Slovakia they have got over there,—if all of them put together can't pay eleven billion dollars, then how are 125 million people ever going to pay 252 billion dollars?

Now if you will turn back to the law of the Lord, Deuteronomy, 15th Chapter, the first verse, you will find where He commanded you have got to remit these debts every seventh year. Now I have been condemned because I wrote a law in Louisiana that all persons burdened with debts which they could not pay would have the right to have these debts suspended on proper showing. They have defamed that law, but in Louisiana it has saved many a person, and I would rather have that.

Well, we have had other things to contend with. I see here is a little report from Kansas City, Mo. I read to you from the Kansas City, Missouri, Journal Post of Monday, January 7th, 1935:

KANSAS CITY (MO.) JOURNAL POST

Monday, Jan. 7, 1935

EVICTED WOMAN WISHES ROOSEVELT COULD SEE 'FULFILLMENT' OF PROMISE

Mrs. Kathleen McDonald sat on the edge of a bare bed Monday morning and watched movers, under the watchful eyes of a deputy sheriff, carry the furniture from her home at 3743 Main street.

"President Roosevelt," she said, "told the nation only a few months ago that no one would lose a home by foreclosure. I wish he could be here this morning to see these movers, backed by the circuit court and the sheriff, throw me out of my house."

A moving man entered the room.

"I'm sorry, lady," he said apologetically, "but we have to have the bed now."

"Kicked Out, Penniless."

Mrs. McDonald arose and walked to the window—stared out at the damp, foggy street scene. Her voice choked, tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Oh, God," she sobbed, "why do they have to do this to us. This home represents the life savings of myself and my sister, \$20,000, and now we're being kicked out, penniless."

"This house was not only our shelter but our livelihood, for we kept roomers. Now we're losing it, and we have no place to go. We do not even know where we'll sleep. We'll have to hunt jobs and begin all over."

"I wired President Roosevelt Monday morning but I don't suppose he'll answer. And just to think, he said that no home would be foreclosed."

Oh, yes, my good friend Mr. Roosevelt rode in on the program that he was going to bring poverty to an absolute end. He was going to bring poverty to an absolute end! He promised to bring down these big fortunes. He promised to see there was no such thing as a man without a home and the comforts of a home. He promised there would be no such thing as an unemployed man, or woman, and how many have you got unemployed today? 21,000,000 unemployed, and if you consider the fact that 54% of the farm labor is unemployed today, and if you will add these to the industrial statistics, you have got 21,000,000 unemployed. And if you doubt that, go over and take the statistics of the E. R. A.,—the relief organization,—and you will find that today they have got 19½ million people on the relief dole today; going to show you there is probably more than 21 million unemployed. Count 2½ to 3 people to every unemployed person, since one man usually earns the bread for three, and you have half of the American people today unemployed, and that doesn't include the doctor, the lawyer and

the candlestick maker, or the professional man, because while he may give up his office, he is still hoping somebody will come along and give him a little business.

Right in my mail today I received a letter from Kansas City, signed by a little girl. It reads:

KANSAS CITY, KANS.

Jan. 19, 1935.

Dear Senator Long:

I listened to your speech over the radio. And you quoted verses from the Bible. I also read the Bible.

I do not believe Mr. Roosevelt has a Bible. And if he did have, he could not read it. I am a poor little girl 12 years old, or I would buy him one. SO IF YOU WILL PLEASE BUY MR. ROOSEVELT A SMALL BIBLE AND MARK THE CHAPTERS OF DEUTERONOMY, THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER TO THE TWELFTH, subject a blessing and a curse:

15th Verse: And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle that thou may eat and be full.

16th Verse: Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived and aye turn aside and serve other gods and worship them.

17th Verse: And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you. And he shut up the heavens that there be no rain and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you.

I believe in God and I think God must have closed up the heavens last summer as a warning to some of the selfish ones on this earth.

Yours truly,

DOROTHY McKENZIE,

1204 Bunker St.

Well, Mr. Roosevelt don't have to read the Bible; all he has to do is read his own promises and keep them. If Roosevelt will keep his promises to the American people, we won't have all of this trouble.

Ladies and gentlemen, the bank deposits show two-thirds of 1% own 2/3 of 100% of all the money in the banks. In other words, 2/3 of 1% own what 2/3 of 100% ought to own. That is the disproportionate balance that maintains today in regard to the bank balances. What is the correction? The only correction is, ladies and gentlemen, that we must return to the law of the Lord: None shall be too big; none shall be too little. We should go out and start immediately so that we will have the jubilee brought back to where it was intended. Maybe not so completely as the Bible intended, but in some respects, that the fortunes of the little will not be allowed to become less, and the fortunes of the big will not be allowed to become bigger. That being done, our problems are all solved.

Why have those uneducated? Why have people in misery? Why have people homeless? In this distress, the Lord has smiled upon this land, so I invite you, I beg you, I beseech you, come into the Share Our Wealth Society; organize in your community a Share Our Wealth Society,—not on socialistic lines; not on communistic lines; not on the lines of Fascism; not on the lines of Bolshevism; but on the lines that we will say that when a man reaches up into the millions of dollars, he has enough; and when a man who is below the average of a home for his family, that he has not had enough. That program which says we will shorten the hours and take up the slack in labor. That program which guarantees to every boy and girl the right to be educated according to their mental capacity, and not according to the financial capacity of their parents.

I hope you will join our Share Our Wealth Society. This is Huey P. Long, United States Senator, talking to you. I hope you will go into your neighborhood, and into the neighborhood next to you there, and get your friends to organize Share Our Wealth Societies.

If you want any information, write to me here in Washington, D. C., and I will give you any information which you may need without any charge whatever. I hope, ladies and gentlemen, that you may see fit to help in this work. I thank you.