

Every Man a King

Senator Huey P. Long, 1934

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Ladies and gentlemen, ... we have no difficult problem to solve in America.

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, ... because in order 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 of the people.

We have a marvelous love for this government of ours; in fact, it is almost a religion, and it is well that it should be, because we have a splendid form of government and we have a splendid set of laws. We have everything here that we need, except that we have neglected the fundamentals upon which the American government was principally predicated.

How many of you remember the first thing that the Declaration of Independence said? It said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that there are certain inalienable rights of the people, and among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; and it said, further, "We hold the view that all men are created equal."

Now, what did they mean by that? Did they mean, my friends, to say that all men were created equal and that meant that ... one man was born to inherit \$10,000,000,000 and that another child was to be born to inherit nothing?

Did that mean, my friends, that someone would come into this world without having had [to do] one lick of work, ... born with more than it and all of its children and children's children could ever dispose of, but that another one would have to be born into a life of starvation? ...

... Is that right of life, my friends, when the young children of this country are being reared into a sphere which is more owned by 12 men than it is by 120 million people?

Is that, my friends, giving them a fair shake of the dice or anything like the inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or anything resembling the fact that all people are created equal; when we have today in America thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions of children on the verge of starvation in a land that is overflowing with too much to eat and too much to wear? ...

... Why should we hesitate or ... quibble or ... quarrel with one another to find out what the difficulty is, when we know what the Lord told us ... , and Moses wrote it out so a blind man could see it, then Jesus told us all about it ... ?

I refer to the Scriptures, now, my friends, ... not for the purpose of ... convincing you ... that I am to be more believed than someone else; but ... because whatever you see there you may rely upon will never be disproved ... ; and you may further depend upon the fact that not one historical fact that the Bible [contains] has ever yet been disproved by any scientific discovery or by reason of anything that has been disclosed to man

[T]he Scripture says ... that ... for a country to survive ... nothing should be held permanently by any one person, and that 50 years seems to be the year of jubilee in which all property would be scattered about and returned to the sources from which it originally came, and every seventh year debt should be remitted. ...

... We have in American today more wealth, more goods, more food, more clothing, more houses than we have ever had. We have everything in abundance here. We have the farm problem, my friends, because we have too much cotton, because we have too much wheat, and have too much corn, and too much potatoes. We have a home-loan problem because we have too many houses, and yet nobody can buy them and live in them.

We have trouble, my friends, in the country, because we have too much money owing, the greatest indebtedness that has ever been given to civilization, where it has been shown that we are incapable of distributing ... the actual things that are here, because the people have not money enough to supply themselves with them, and because the greed of a few men is such that they think it is necessary that they own everything... .

... We have in America today, ladies and gentlemen, \$272 billion of debt. ... The entire currency of the United States is only \$6 billion. ... You would have to have 45 times the entire money supply of the United States today to pay the debts of the people of America, and then they would just have to start out from scratch, without a dime to go on with.

So, my friends, ... I am going to tell you what the wise men of all ages and all times, down even to the present day, have all said: That you must keep the wealth of the country scattered, and you must limit the amount that any one man can own. You cannot let any man own \$300 or \$400 billion. If you do, one man can own all of the wealth that the United States has in it. ...

So, we have in America today, my friends, a condition by which about 10 men dominate the means of activity in at least 85 percent of the activities that you own. ... They own the banks, they own the steel mills, they own the railroads, they own the bonds, they own the mortgages, they own the stores, and they have chained the country from one end to the other, until there is not any kind of business that a small, independent man could go into today and make a living... .

If you reduce a man to the point where he is starving to death and bleeding and dying, how do you expect that man to get hold of any money to spend with you? It is not possible. Then, ladies and gentlemen, how do you expect people to live... ?

Then we have heard of the great Greek philosopher[s], Socrates [and] Plato, and we have read the[ir] dialog..., in which one said that great riches brought on great poverty, and would be destructive of a country. ... [Y]ou must not let any one man be too poor, and you must not let any one man be too rich; that the same mill that grinds out the extra rich is the mill that will grind out the extra poor, because, in order that the extra rich can become so affluent, they must necessarily take more of what ordinarily would belong to the average man. ...

So that was the view of Socrates and Plato. That was the view of the English statesmen. That was the view of American statesmen. That was the view of American statesmen like Daniel Webster, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan, and Theodore Roosevelt, and even as late as Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt. ...

But ... nothing that has been done up to this date has taken one dime away from these big fortune holders; they own just as much as they did, and probably a little bit more; they hold just as many of the debts of the common people as they ever held, and probably a little bit more; and unless we, my friends, are going to give the people of this country a fair shake of the dice, by which they will all get something out of the funds of this land, there is not a chance on the topside of this God's eternal earth by which we can rescue this country and rescue the people of this country. ...

Now, we have organized a society, and we call it "Share Our Wealth Society," a society with the motto "Every Man a King." Every man a king, so there would be no such thing as a man or woman who did not have the necessities of life, who would be dependent upon the whims and caprices ... of the financial [titans] for a living.

... We propose to limit the wealth of big men in the country. There is an average of \$15,000 in wealth to every family in America. That is right here today. We do not propose to divide it up

equally ... , but we propose to limit poverty that we will allow to be inflicted upon any man's family. We will not say we are going to try to guarantee any equality, or \$15,000 to families. No; but we do say that one third of the average is low enough ..., that there should be a guarantee of a family wealth of around \$5,000; enough for a home, an automobile, a radio, and the ordinary conveniences, and the opportunity to educate their children; a fair share of the income of this land

We have to limit fortunes. [W]e will allow no one man to own more than \$50 million. We think that with that limit we will be able to carry out the balance of the program. [I]t will still be more than any one man, or any one man and his children and their children, will be able to spend in their lifetimes... .

Another thing we propose is old-age pension of \$30 a month for everyone that is 60 years old. Now, we do not give this pension to a man making \$1,000 a year, and we do not give it to him if he has \$10,000 in property, but outside of that we do.

We will limit hours of work. There is not any necessity of having over-production. ... Let it be good and not a curse, and then we will have 5 hours a day and 5 days a week, or even less than that, and we might give a man a whole month off during a year, or give him 2 months; and we might do what other countries have seen fit to do, and what I did in Louisiana, by having schools by which adults could go back and learn the things that have been discovered since they went to school. ...

"Every man a king." Every man to eat when there is something to eat; all to wear something when there is something to wear. That makes us all sovereign. ...

God told you what the trouble was. The philosophers told you what the trouble was; and when you have a country where one man owns more than 100,000 people, or a million people, ... where there are four men ... that have got more control over things than all the 120 million people together, you know what the trouble is. ... [W]e have got to hit the root with the axe. Centralized power [and] centralized credit in the hands of a few, is the trouble.

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 send you the data on this proposition. ... Let us make known to the people what we are going to do. ... Many thousands of them are meeting through the United States, and every day we are

getting hundreds and hundreds of letters. ... [M]ake known your wishes to your Senators and Representatives in Congress.

I thank you, my friends, for your kind attention, and I hope you will enroll with us, take care of your own work in the work of this government, and share or help in our Share Our Wealth society. I thank you.