

## Share the Wealth [TRANSCRIPTION]

... [N]ow in the third year of [President Roosevelt's] administration, we find more of our people unemployed than at any other time. We find our houses empty and our people hungry, many of them half-clothed and many of them not clothed at all.

Mr. Hopkins announced twenty-two millions on the dole, a new high-water mark in that particular sum, a few weeks ago. We find not only the people going further into debt, but that the United States is going further into debt. The states are going further into debt, and the cities and towns are even going into bankruptcy. The condition has become deplorable.

Instead of his promises, the only remedy that Mr. Roosevelt has prescribed is to borrow more money if he can and to go further into debt. The last move was to borrow \$5 billion more on which we must pay interest for the balance of our lifetimes, and probably during the lifetime of our children. And with it all, there stalks a slimy specter of want, hunger, destitution, and pestilence, all because of the fact that in the land of too much and of too much to wear, our president has failed in his promise to have these necessities of life distributed into the hands of the people who have need of them.

...

From the studies which I have made, I charged in the United States Senate along about 1933 and 1934 that four percent of the people owned 85 percent of the wealth and that 96 percent of our people owned less than 16 percent of the wealth. I charged that 70 percent of the people of the United States didn't own enough to pay their debts. There was considerable ridicule made against the figures which I gave. During the last month of April of this very year, about three or four weeks ago, the newspaper in New York City with the largest daily circulation called *The Daily News* announced that it would send a special representative to Washington to investigate the figures that I'd given out.

Now, my friends, you have heard me read how a great New York newspaper, after investigations, declared that all I have said about the bad distribution of this nation's wealth is true. But we have been about our work to correct this situation. That is why the Share Our Wealth societies are forming in every nook and corner of America. They're meeting tonight. Soon there will be



Share Our Wealth societies for everyone to meet. They have a great work to perform.

Here is what we stand for in a nutshell:

Number one, we propose that every family in America should at least own a homestead equal in value to not less than one third the average family wealth. ... our first proposition means that every family will have a home and the comforts of a home up to a value of not less than around \$5,000 or a little more than that.

Number two, we propose that no family shall own more than three hundred times the average family wealth, which means that no family shall possess more than a wealth of approximately \$5 million—none to own less than \$5,000, none to own more than \$5 million.

...

Number three, we propose that every family shall have an income equal to at least one third of the average family income in America. If all were allowed to work, there'd be an income of from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per family. We propose that one third would be the minimum. We propose that no family will have an earning of less than around \$2,000 to \$2,500 and that none will have more than three hundred times the average less the ordinary income taxes, which means that a million dollars would be the limit on the highest income.

We also propose to give the old-age pensions to the old people, not by taxing them or their children, but by levying the taxes upon the excess fortunes to whittle them down, and on the excess incomes and excess inheritances, so that the people who reach the age of sixty can be retired from the active labor of life and given an opportunity to have surcease and ease for the balance of the life that they have on earth.

We also propose the care for the veterans, including the cash payment of the soldiers' bonus. We likewise propose that there should be an education for every youth in this land and that no youth would be dependent upon the financial means of his parents in order to have a college education.

**\*Bio: Huey Long** of Louisiana, born in 1893, worked as a traveling salesman, earned a law degree in a single year, and then entered public life as a railroad commissioner in 1918. Drawing on a political power base that he built among Louisiana’s small towns and rural districts, he became governor in 1928. Fearlessly, he took on the moneyed interests of Baton Rouge and Wall Street, calling for a massive redistribution of wealth. In 1932, amidst the Great Depression, Long was elected to the Senate, where he gained a national following with his “share-our-wealth” plan and his “Every Man a King” philosophy. Once described as the “most colorful, as well as the most dangerous, man to engage in American politics,” Long was known in the Senate for his filibustering and his flamboyant oratorical style. Nicknamed the “Kingfish,” his ambitions soon turned to the White House. In 1935, at the height of his popularity, Huey Long was assassinated in Baton Rouge. [source: United States Senate]

**Source:** Huey Long “Share the Wealth,” 1934.

Excerpts based on a speech from “American Rhetoric – Online Speech Bank,”

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/hueyplongstvitUSDancegovernment.htm>