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An Analysis of the Governorship of Huey Long

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOVERNORSHIP OF HUEY LONG

A Thesis

Presented to
the School of Graduate Studies
Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
N. G. Dalrymple
May 1968

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was not entirely accurate. That Louisiana received the Huey Long was highly political, but it was far from being right and forcible.

There were laughs, to be sure; Long did not care and was in lightening up the tragedy of politics with his farcical-show antics. Although he felt that "it was both ways," he rationalized that even his critics "wouldn't have heard of Huey Long to start with if it hadn't been for the election and some newspaper."

¹News item in The New York Times, January 29, 1938.

²Quoted in Forrest Davis, Huey Long: A Gaudy Biography (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1951), p. 57.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Huey Pierce Long was one of the most flamboyant and controversial political leaders of the early twentieth century. Elected Governor of Louisiana in 1928 on the platform "Every Man a King," Long soon became nationally known for his erratic and picturesque behavior as "the Kingfish."

The New York Times heralded the election of Huey Long as Governor of the Pelican State as the appearance of "a worthy competitor in the field of light political farce."¹ Later, many persons realized that the statement was not entirely accurate. What Louisiana received in Huey Long was highly political, but it was far from being light and farcical.

There were laughs, to be sure; Long did not "see any harm in lightening up the tragedy of politics" with his burlesque-show antics. Although he felt that "it cut both ways," he rationalized that even his critics "wouldn't have heard of Huey Long to stab at him if it hadn't been for the Kingfish and some tomfoolery."²

¹News item in The New York Times, January 29, 1928.

²Quoted in Forrest Davis, Huey Long: A Candid Biography (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1935), p. 57.

As chief executive for the people of Louisiana, Long flouted the traditions of an ordinarily dignified office. His Excellency conducted affairs of state from his bedroom of his suite in Baton Rouge's Heidelberg Hotel; engaged in fisticuffs;³ and, although "not much of a singer," received "plenty of encores" as "The Singing Fool" at the Frolics cabaret in New Orleans' Vieux Carre.⁴

Such conduct, however, failed to "break his power" and Long, as governor, initiated a legislative program which marked a significant departure from Jeffersonian traditions in the politics of Louisiana.⁵

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to show the relationship between representative legislation of the Long administration and certain social, economic, and political conditions existing in Louisiana at that time.

³Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 545.

⁴News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 30, 1929.

⁵Simkins, op. cit., pp. 544-45.

Importance of the study. Much of the Huey Long image that exists today was created by the press of Louisiana. Ranging in topic from a lighthearted campaign to determine the proper etiquette of eating "corn pone and pot-likker"⁶ to a bloody fight in the restroom of a fashionable resort,⁷ "the Kingfish," with his ungrammatical speech and unpolished mannerisms, was "good copy."⁸

The major newspapers of Louisiana, the Baton Rouge State Times, the Times-Picayune, The Shreveport Times, and the New Orleans Item, as well as the numerous rural weeklies of the state, were constantly opposed to long.⁹ In the early months of the Long administration, the New Orleans Times-Picayune, the most influential newspaper of the state, came out in favor of "any properly organized movement to compel Governor Long to vacate his office."¹⁰ Editorially,

⁶News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 26, 1931. Long invited other governors to express their views on how the "delectable concoction should be eaten."

⁷News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 27, 1933.

⁸News item in The New York Times, January 24, 1928.

⁹Stan Optowsky, The Longs of Louisiana (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 247-49. For fifteen years Optowsky was a staff reporter for the Times-Picayune.

¹⁰News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 25, 1929.

Colonel John E. Ewing, owner-publisher of The Shreveport Times and the Baton Rouge State Times, called for Governor Long to be impeached.¹¹ In New Orleans, the press openly charged that the Governor was a Hitler of the swamplands, a Mussolini of the bayous, a demagogue, a dictator, and a man "tempermentally unfit" to hold office.¹²

These labels, which have survived to the present, have been re-enforced by various studies of the Huey Long governorship drawn, in large part, from newspaper accounts. Today, therefore, it is customary to dismiss Long as an "American Fascist."¹³ The epithet, however, is misleading and does not offer an explanation to the phenomenon that was Huey Long.

The Louisiana that witnessed the inauguration of Huey Long in 1928 could hardly be termed a modern state. The state highway system had only three major bridges, less than three hundred miles of cement highways, and merely thirty-five miles of roadways with asphalt surfacing. The

¹¹News item in The Shreveport Times, March 24, 1929.

¹²News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 25, 1929.

¹³T. Harry Williams, Romance and Realism in Southern Politics (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1960), p. 73.

state supported educational program, from the elementary level to the state university, was inadequate. The per cent of illiteracy was more than three times that of the nation as a whole. Of its residents over ten years of age, 13.5 per cent were unable to read and write.¹⁴

Thus, for Hamilton Basso, who disagreed with those who saw Long as a power-mad dictator

to wave aside his roads, his free schoolbooks, his schoolbus service, his new schoolhouses, his tax reductions, his debt moratorium, his abolition of the poll tax, is to wave aside some of the most important reasons for his continued success. It is to make the people of Louisiana absolute fools and idiots. After the control first of the plantations, banking, railroad and utility interests, then the New Orleans Ring . . . Huey [Long] came as a welcome, even wholesome relief.¹⁵

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The Ring. Throughout this study, the term "the New Orleans Ring" is defined as an unchartered coalition of Orleans Parish [New Orleans] politicians, industrialists, and planters who attempted to keep in office men favorable to Orleans Parish and their particular interests. During

¹⁴Computed from the United States Bureau of the Census Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935).

¹⁵Hamilton Basso, Mainstream (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), p. 57.

the first third of the twentieth century, the mayor of the Crescent City, Martin Behrman, was the central figure in Ring activities.

North and south Louisiana. The cultural and religious contrasts within Louisiana have led to the frequent application of the framework "north Louisiana" and "south Louisiana" to many fields of study. Fifty-four of the sixty-four parishes are either more than two-thirds Catholic or more than two-thirds Protestant,¹⁶ as shown in Figure 1. Generally speaking neither aggressive Catholicism nor anticlericalism has been the norm of state politics, but on occasions religious differences have provided a foundation for political divisions.¹⁷

III. DELIMITATION OF STUDY

This study is concerned with certain political, social, and economic activities in Louisiana from May 21, 1928, until January 25, 1932: the Long administration.

¹⁶T. Lynn Smith and Homer L. Nitt, The People of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), p. 327.

¹⁷The hypocrisy of the uplander is too much for the Gallic mind: "In north Louisiana," as the saying goes, "a wet will vote dry, while in south Louisiana a dry will vote wet."

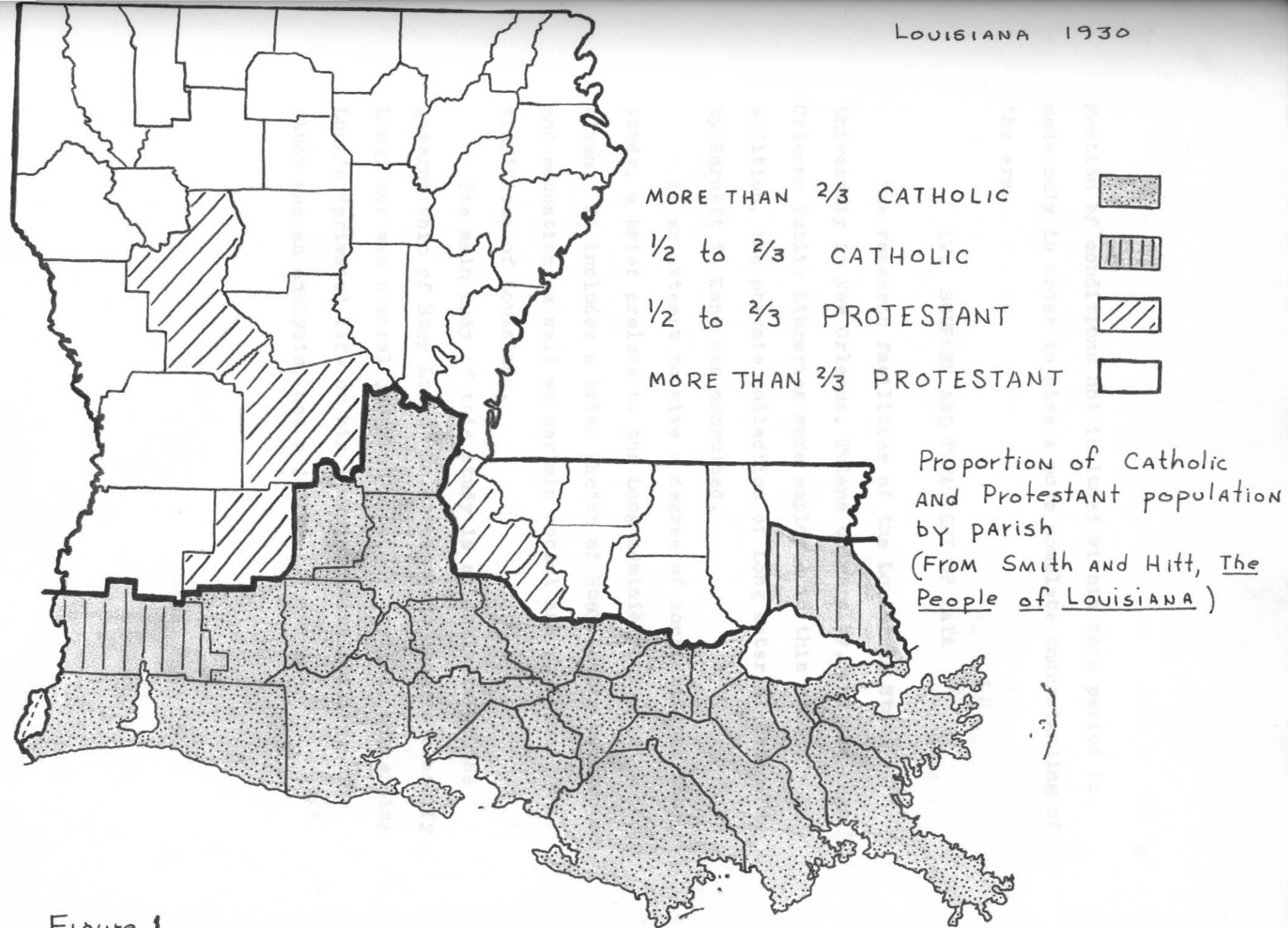


Figure 1.

Mention of conditions not included within this period is made only in order to give a more complete understanding of the era.

IV. SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF DATA

The research facilities of the Louisiana State University in New Orleans, Tulane University, and the New Orleans Public Libraries were employed in this study. In addition, the private collection of Long material owned by Harnett T. Kane was consulted.

In an attempt to give a degree of continuity to the study, a brief prelude to the Long administration is given. It includes a brief sketch of Huey Long's background and education as well as certain social and political traditions of Louisiana.

The main body of this study is an analysis of the governorship of Huey Long. No attempt was made to classify Long, nor was a moral judgment made, or implied, concerning Long's "private" life or his administrative ability. The study was an analysis, not a judgment.

CHAPTER II

PRELUDE TO THE KINGFISH

The legacy of class conflict in nineteenth-century Louisiana served as more than a backdrop for the rise of Huey Long; traditional class antagonisms comprised much of the deep emotional and symbolic content of Longism itself.

I. RELICS OF POPULISM

The basis of Populist protest in Louisiana stemmed from the post-Civil War continuation of the plantation system through the credit devices of the sharecrop and the crop-lien and through the absolute increase in both the number of plantations and the acreage controlled by them.¹

A southern myth has long pictured the Civil War as breaking up the great plantations and "purging" the South of all vestiges of planter aristocracy. In addition, historians have cited evidence in abundance to certify the death of the plantation system and the birth of an agrarian revolution.² According to census reports, the number of

¹Roger W. Shugg, "Survival of the Plantation System in Louisiana," Journal of Southern History, II (August, 1937), 311-25.

²E.g., Charles and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of the American Civilization (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), II, 196; Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 627.

"farms" in the South increased from 449,936 in 1860 to 1,110,294 in 1880 and more than 17,430,000 acres were added to the total acreage of farmland. In the same period the size of the average "farm" declined from 347 acres to 156 acres.³

Although considerable redistribution of real estate ownership did take place, the portioning-out of plantation lands in small plots among croppers was more a reflection of the revolution in the methods of labor and finance than it was a revolution in land tenure. Under the sharecrop system plots were worked by croppers who shared the produce with the landlords; but these subdivisions did not change their ownership. Each plot worked by a cropper, however, constituted a separate "farm" within the definition under which the census marshals worked. Thus the perpetuation of the plantation pattern tended to be obscured. In Catahoula Parish, for example, 171 "farms" of less than twenty acres were reported by census marshals in 1890, although the local tax assessor could find only nineteen.⁴

³ United States Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880. Statistics of Agriculture, Vol. III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), p. 25.

⁴ Roger W. Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 1880-1895 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), pp. 235-36.

Where the soil was less fertile, in the Florida Parishes,⁵ southwestern pine flats, and northern uplands, the farmers turned to commercial lumbering. Although they did not stop raising their food and as much cotton as they could, they also cut into the timberlands for a "cash crop."⁶

Several northern lumber syndicates entered Louisiana about 1880 along the railways, purchased large tracts of public and private lands, and cut a wide swath through the forests of the state. It was a common procedure for these companies to homestead their employees on public land and then strip it of timber; in this manner they acquired lumber for less than one-tenth the normal price. Railroads also joined the lucrative business. The Texas and Pacific "backbone grant" up the Red River, through the center of the oak and long-leaf pine forests, aroused local Populism by dispossession of squatters and farmers. The lumber companies received most of the timber. The

⁵The five northeastern parishes of Louisiana, between the Mississippi and Pearl rivers, are called the Florida parishes because Spain retained them as part of West Florida when retroceding Louisiana to France in 1800. They became part of the United States by insurrection in 1810.

⁶Shugg, op. cit., p. 268.

extent of their operation may be judged by the situation in Rapides Parish, where there were fifteen sawmills in 1886; the largest one, owned by a New York syndicate, turned out 250,000 board feet per day.⁷

By the end of the nineteenth century it was apparent that the farmers of Louisiana had become deeply involved in the commercial "cotton and cawn" economy. The acreage planted in cotton was greater than that allotted to corn, and the cultivation of either occupied more acres than any other crop.⁸

The specialization in cotton was accompanied by the growth of tenancy. To grow cotton at all, the poorer farmers had to go into debt for "seed and furnish;" and the larger the debt grew, the greater the amount of cotton they attempted to grow.

In 1894, after three decades of decline, cotton prices bottomed at 4.3 cents per pound. The damage to crops by the flooding Mississippi and Red rivers in 1891-92 and the Credit Panic of 1893 additionally depressed the agri-

⁷Shugg, op. cit., p. 269.

⁸United States Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States: 1880. Reports on Cotton Production, Vol. V (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), p. 67.

cultural economy.⁹ It was the combined impact of these economic pressures which drove the farmers to seek redress through politics.

Farmer agitation in Louisiana up to the 1890's had limited itself to working within the Democratic party. The willingness of Democrats to agree to agrarian demands was tempered by their convictions that farmers would not do any thing to endanger the maintenance of white supremacy. Continued Democratic rejection of farmer proposals, however, served to move more aggressive farmers toward third-party activities.

In the Congressional election of 1890, farmers in the Fourth Congressional District, taking in nearly all of north-central and northwestern Louisiana, countered the Democratic maneuvering by holding a rump convention in Natchitoches. Although the farmers' candidate was defeated in 1890, within two years the farmers of Louisiana were organized in the Populist party.¹⁰

The normal tactic of Louisiana Populists, similar to the agrarian protest in other southern states, was to ally

⁹Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana During the Nineties," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V (June, 1918), 4.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 7-8, 11.

with the other minority party. In the Pelican State the Populists' "great stronghold" was in the hill parishes of the northwest, peopled mainly by small white farmers. The movement "never gained much of a foothold in the cotton parishes of the delta, or in the sugar parishes, and was never strong in the cities."¹¹

The election of 1892 provided no reflection of the state's farmer influence because the dominant issue was the fate of the Louisiana Lottery Company. The topic so divided the Democratic party that one pro-Lottery Democrat and one anti-Lottery Democrat ran in the general election. In addition, farmer delegates from the Florida parishes and southwestern and northern Louisiana put forward an independent Populist ticket. The Populist made a poor showing and carried only the parishes of Catahoula, Vernon, Winn, and Grant.¹²

The scene was set for a widespread revolt against the Democratic party by the time of the state election of 1896. The severe droughts of 1895 which affected the farmers of southwest and north Louisiana intensified farmer

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

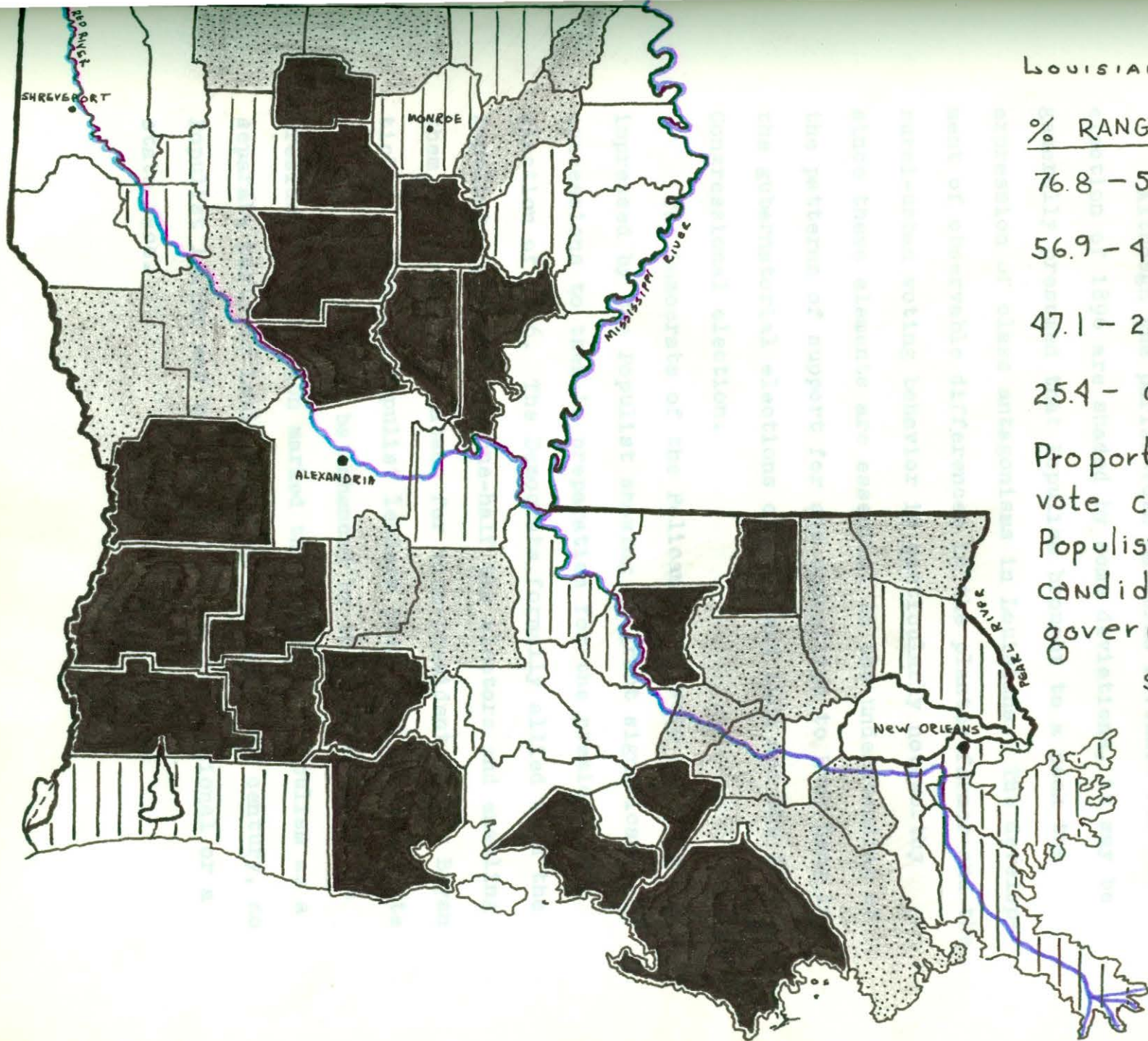
¹² Berthold C. Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XXVII (October, 1944), 964-1118.

discontent. In the Crescent City, New Orleans reformers entered a candidate for mayor against the nominee of the city machine. And in the sugar bowl region, planters, fearing Grover Cleveland's tariff policies, aligned with the Republicans.

After considerable friction, the Populists, sugar planters, and Republicans settled on a state slate headed by gubernatorial candidate John Pharr, a Republican sugar planter from St. Mary Parish. The Democrats nominated Governor Murphy J. Foster, the anti-Lottery candidate in 1892, for re-election on a platform which avoided issues of concern to farmers.¹³

The areas of the state most hostile to and most receptive to the Populists are shown in Figure 2. The strongholds of the agrarian protest were the north-central uplands and the Florida parishes. The spread of small farmers into the southwestern part of the state and into the second tier of parishes bordering on the northeastern Delta parishes explained Populist appeal in those areas. Anti-Populist areas included the planter parishes of the Red River and Mississippi River deltas, the Felicianas, and

¹³Lena M. Vegas, "The Populist Party in Louisiana" (unpublished Master's thesis, Tulane University, New Orleans, 1942), pp. 97-103, 113.



LOUISIANA 1896

% RANGE

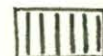
76.8 - 58.2



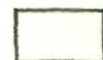
56.9 - 48.8



47.1 - 26.0



25.4 - 0.0



Proportion of parish vote cast for the Populist-Republican candidate for governor, 1896

statewide % : 43.0

(From Heard and Strong, Southern Primaries and Elections)

FIGURE 1.

the parishes containing the urban centers of Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, and New Orleans.

Although the parish-vote patterns revealed for the election of 1896 are shaded by some deviations, it may be generally presumed that Populism brought to a peak the expression of class antagonisms in Louisiana. The development of observable differences in the planter-farmer and the rural-urban voting behavior is particularly noteworthy since these elements are essential to the understanding of the patterns of support for and opposition to Huey Long in the gubernatorial elections of 1924 and 1928 and the 1930 Congressional election.

The Democrats of the Pelican State were sufficiently impressed by the Populist showing to grant significant concessions to them in preparation for the presidential election of 1896. The Democrats formally allied with the Populists, giving them one-half the electors and enabling them to support Tom Watson for vice-president on the Bryan ticket. Although Populist leaders predicted that the fate of their party would be enhanced by the fusion, the 1896 presidential election marked the decline of Populism as a separate party in Louisiana. In the twentieth century, no Populist leader was to enter either a Congressional or a state race.

The new willingness of Democrats to pen agrarian reforms into the Louisiana Constitution of 1898 was one factor in the rapid decline of the Populist party. The document created, among other things, a State Board of Appraisers to assess utility companies, agencies to regulate banks and railroads, and a State Board of Agriculture and Immigration. The new Constitution also brought about, to the applause of both Democrats and Populists, the effective disfranchisement of the Negro.

By the start of the twentieth century, Louisiana had seemingly achieved class harmony within one big party, unified by considerations of race. Populism was dead. The Negro was politically sterile. The situation gave rise to a number of interrelated consequences, including a dulling of issues, declining voter turnouts, and continued control of the party by the same inner clique.

II. THE NEW ORLEANS RING

The Choctaw Club of New Orleans, since its formation in 1897, has been an organization of professional politicians seeking to maintain control of the Orleans Parish government. Known more commonly as the "ring," the "Choctaws," or, after a factional riff in the early 1920's, as the "old regulars," this organization has constituted

a Democratic machine similar in objective and methods to the city machines in various non-southern states. A study of the operation of the New Orleans Ring in Louisiana politics is not a direct concern of this investigation and, in addition, has already been successfully undertaken.¹⁴ Of greater significance here is the presentation of material which demonstrates how the New Orleans Ring became the controlling force in Louisiana politics and the consequences for public policy of that control.

The primacy of the Crescent City in state politics was the natural outcome of its number of voters and its share of seats in the Legislature and in the state central committee of the Democratic party.¹⁵ In state primary elections the New Orleans vote constituted over one-fifth of the state vote. Under the Constitution of 1898, Orleans was allotted twenty of the one-hundred representatives and eight of thirty-nine Senators. A similar proportion of the state central committee of the Democratic party was granted to New Orleans. The city of New Orleans, therefore, could

¹⁴This evaluation of the New Orleans Ring relies heavily on George M. Reynolds, Machine Politics in New Orleans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938).

¹⁵The city of New Orleans is co-extensive with the Parish of Orleans. The Commission Council was the governing body of both and was, therefore, both a state and a municipal agent for all purposes of local government.

be the decisive factor in the election of state officials, the referenda of amendments to the Constitution, passage of legislation, and in shaping party rules.¹⁶

The Ring's superior position in Louisiana politics was the natural outgrowth of Orleans Parish's dependence upon and vulnerability to the governor and the Legislature. Following the pattern set by the 1879 Constitution, the Constitutions of 1898 and 1921 were miserly in their grants of power to parish and city governments. Local issues were, consequently, cast into state politics. Thus, to maintain their position in city politics the Ring was forced to concern itself with the election of friendly or at least nonbelligerent governors and Solons.¹⁷

The emergence of the Ring in state politics added the one-sided elements of that strong organization to the one-party system and swelled the Ring's influence within the state. The common tactic of "back-scratching" was often employed by the Ring to develop a rural-parish vote to back its own bills. The Ring would back certain rural-parish measures not affecting Orleans Parish interests in

¹⁶ Reynolds, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 23-41.

order to secure adequate backing for its measures. Rural Solons, in order to gain Ring favor, often exempted Orleans from coverage by amending their bills with what came to be a common phrase in the Louisiana Legislature, "parish of Orleans excepted."¹⁸

Aside from directing the operations of the Crescent City's legislative delegation, the Ring backed slates of candidates in all elections of interest to the voters of New Orleans. The organization never openly enrolled a gubernatorial aspirant of its own or endorsed one early in a campaign. Usually, after a period of careful study, the Ring would quietly secure the necessary "understandings" with the candidate who was not hostile to it and seemed to have the best prospects of carrying a plurality of votes in the rural parishes.¹⁹ After making these "arrangements," the Ring would publicly voice its sponsorship, occasionally as late as the night before the election.²⁰

Oil eventually dwarfed the gas and electric, lumber, planter, and railroad factions which constituted a large

¹⁸

Ibid., pp. 38-39.

¹⁹

Ibid., p. 40.

²⁰

T. Harry Williams, Romance and Realism in Southern Politics (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 67.

segment of the New Orleans Ring. Accordingly, in the early 1920's the Standard Oil Company became a major political and economic factor in Louisiana.²¹

The Ring and Standard Oil Company usually emerged as the victors in the running battle between New Orleans and the rural parishes.²² Ring rule moved Louisiana into a civic vacuum and the "safe" policies of the organization developed a reservoir of dissatisfaction from which Huey Long was to later draw much support.²³

21

Ibid.

22 From 1900 to 1924, the Ring backed the successful gubernatorial candidacies of Heard, Blanchard, Sanders, Pleasant, and Fuqua.

23

Cf., V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 159-60.

CHAPTER III

THE FLEDGLING KINGFISH

There is an obvious relationship between Huey Long's environment and his political philosophy. The program that he advocated was, in many respects, a twentieth century version of traditional Louisiana Populism.¹ However, it is of significance that during his entire political career he never seriously mentioned the two great southern legends: the Old South and the Lost Cause. In an era when many politicians attempted to recall the images of past glories, Huey Long spoke of the economic realities of the present and the future.²

Huey Pierce Long, Jr., was born on August 30, 1893, in a "comfortable, well-built, four-room log house," the eighth of nine children, in the small town of Winnfield, Winn Parish, in north-central Louisiana.³ Huey's father cultivated a portion of a 320 acre tract of soil suitable

¹ V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 157.

² T. Harry Williams, Romance and Realism in Southern Politics (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), pp. 68-69.

³ Huey P. Long, Every Man a King: The Autobiography of Huey P. Long (New Orleans: National Book Company, 1933), p. 2.

only for subsistence farming, though it was in danger of a second growth of loblolly pine. Winn Parish was mean poor and populated mainly by Protestant small farmers. Social opportunities, according to Long, were largely limited to participation in Baptist revivals and "attending every funeral within ten miles."⁴

In 1900, the Arkansas Southern Railroad constructed a small lumber line from El Dorado, Arkansas, to Winnfield and located the depot on the Long farm. The temporary prosperity of the sawmills soon brought other lines into the area, swelling the population of Winnfield to almost three thousand persons. One side of the Long tract became the site of the business district and another portion was developed into a residential area.

There is a myth about the background of Huey Long that tints almost everything that has been written about him. That myth pictures him as a "redneck," without education or culture; in the language of the South, "white trash."⁵ The Longs were, however, highly respectful of education and eager to acquire it. With the financial security brought by land sales, each of the Long children

⁴ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁵ Williams, op. cit., p. 68.

was able to acquire at least a sampling of college life.⁶

After completion of high school, the young Kingfish traveled through north Louisiana selling Cottolene, a lard substitute for kitchen use. The ambitious young politico never stayed in hotels while on selling trips. Long said:

I always drove out beyond town to a farmhouse where they'd put me up . . . and later I would make it my business to drop those folks a post card so they'd be sure to remember me.⁷

After sales positions in Kansas City, Houston, Memphis, and Oklahoma City, Long enrolled in the Oklahoma State University Law School in 1912. His stay was notable only for its political turbulence. Flouting a campus-organized Wilson-for-President Club, Long announced in favor of Champ Clark and staged a walkout when the original club held its meeting. Long's organization unanimously endorsed Clark. As a result of this mild adventure, Long developed a tactic he would later employ for higher stakes. His dictum: "In a political fight, when you have nothing in favor of your side, start a row in the opposition."⁸

⁶The Long family produced three doctors and two lawyers.

⁷Quoted by Hermann B. Deutsch, The Huey Long Murder Case (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), p. 14.

⁸Quoted in Thomas Martin, Dynasty: The Longs of Louisiana (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 27.

In 1914 Huey married Rose McConnell of Shreveport. The couple settled in a two-room apartment in New Orleans and in October of that year the young bridegroom entered Tulane University as a student of law. Huey was faced with the alternative of becoming a lawyer very quickly or of abandoning the effort entirely when his finances ran low in the late months of spring. However, he petitioned Chief Justice Frank A. Monroe of the Louisiana Supreme Court to assemble the majority of the Court necessary to give the qualifying examination. On May 15, 1915, Huey Long, at twenty-one, was licensed to practice law.⁹

A few days after passing the bar examination, Long returned to Winnfield to a four-dollar-a-month rented office to begin practice. The clients, though, were few and the first month's rent was paid with a "hot" check. Slowly the clients drifted in and Huey developed what he called a "chip and whetstone" practice.¹⁰

Most of the early cases came from the railroad yards--workmen's compensation and injury suits. But Huey's first major political contact came when a widow asked him to sue the Bank of Winnfield for money she thought that

⁹Long, op. cit., pp. 9-17.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 22.

the bank owed her. Although neither he nor the widow had the one hundred dollars for the required legal bond, Huey took the case. With characteristic swagger Huey went to the bank, sought out one of the directors, State Senator J. S. Harper, and persuaded him to post the necessary bond so that the bank could be sued.¹¹

A few months after the declaration of war with Germany, the same Senator Harper published a pamphlet, "Issues of the Day--Freedom of Speech--Financial Slavery," in which he advocated the taxing of wealth for war costs instead of issuing bonds. In the first month of 1918, a Federal Grand Jury in Alexandria, Louisiana, issued an indictment against Harper for violation of the Espionage Act.

The attorneys for the defense were the brothers Huey and Julius Long. During the course of the trial, in a New Orleans Times-Picayune interview, Huey revealed his careful examination and acceptance of the Harper thesis.¹² The case dragged to tiresome lengths, but upon the close of evidence, Julius Long presented a well-constructed argument for the defense and the Senator was acquitted.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 23-25.

¹² News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, February 22, 1918.

The Harper trial catapulted twenty-four year old Huey P. Long into the Louisiana limelight. In a letter to the New Orleans Item, a few days after the trial, Huey set forth to the people of the Pelican State the earliest indication of his political philosophy:

A conservative estimate is that about sixty-five or seventy per cent of the entire wealth of the United States is owned by two per cent of the people. Sixty-eight per cent of the whole people living in the United States own but two per cent of its wealth. From the year 1890 to 1910, the wealth of this nation trebled, yet the masses owned less in 1910 than they did in 1890 and a greater per cent of the people lived in rented and mortgaged homes in 1910 than did in 1900. Reports from the Committee of Industrial Relations, appointed by the President [Wilson], showed that wealth is fast concentrating in the hands of a few.

But the greatest cause for industrial unrest is that of education. Authorities on education tell us that eighty out of every one hundred people in the United States never enter high school; only fourteen out of every thousand gets a college education; 690 out of every thousand never finish the fourth grade in school. Does such a condition give the ordinary man his proper return of the nation's wealth? What do you think of such a game of life so brutally and cruelly unfair, with the dice so loaded that the child of today must enter it with only fourteen chances out of a thousand in his favor of getting a college education and with 986 chances against securing the lucky draw? How can this nation prosper with the ordinary child having only twenty chances in a thousand of securing the first part of the game?

This is the condition, north east, south, and west; with wealth concentrating, classes becoming defined, there is little opportunity for Christian uplift and education and cannot be until there is more economic reform. This is the problem that the good people of

this country must consider.¹³

At twenty-four, Huey Long possessed a political platform. Without serious modification, but with sophisticated enlargements, the creeds of "Every Man a King" and "Share Our Wealth" were roughly outlined in his letter on the concentration of wealth.

Long sought the one state office then open to one of his age and north Louisiana residence: Third District Railroad Commissioner.¹⁴ As a political unknown, Long had few supporters and little influence, and competed with three others in an attempt to unseat the popular incumbent, Burk A. Bridges, who was running for re-election.

The campaign the fledgling Kingfish waged for the seat on the Commission, in the summer of 1918, set the pattern for Long's future campaigns. From his headquarters in Shreveport, Long mailed thousands of envelopes, each containing four circulars, to almost every voter in the Third District. They were, naturally, partisan and slanted, but they were lengthy compositions--an average product ran from 1,000 to 1,800 words--and they were packed with

¹³Letter to the Editor in the New Orleans Item, March 1, 1918.

¹⁴The Constitution of 1898 prescribed no minimum age qualification for the office of Railroad Commissioner.

political and economic information.¹⁵

Instead of aping the "rednecks" by wearing overalls and riding in a wagon, Long, dressed in a smart business suit and driving an automobile, stumped in areas long ignored by office-seekers. Accustomed to recounts of the Old South and the Lost Cause, the farmers of the Third District were confronted with a man who told them to fight for what they wanted. Long later recalled:

I canvassed the farmers in person and spent most of my time at night tacking up my campaign posters in the neighborhood being canvassed. Occasionally, so intense was my campaign, I called people from their beds at all hours of the night to talk politics.

Nothing in my campaign seemed to please farmers more or cause them to recollect me nearly so favorably as to call them from their beds at night.¹⁶

Long secured 55,515 votes to Bridges' 6,979 votes in the first primary and attracted a majority of the votes in eight of the twenty-eight parishes in the district. In the runoff, Huey won by 635 votes (7,286 to 6,651).

The six-year office gave Long a respectable platform from which to launch his program. He bombarded friends and the newspapers with circulars which outlined in detail the injustices in the state's handling of corporate interests,

¹⁵The best collection of Long material is in the Tulane University Library in New Orleans, Louisiana.

¹⁶Long, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

in particular, Standard Oil Company, the dominant vested interest in the state.

Standard Oil had summarily moved to put more than one hundred independent oil companies out of business by denying them the use of the Standard-owned pipelines, necessary to carry their crude oil from the field to the refineries. Long countered with an ingenuity and initiative characteristic of his entire public career. He persuaded Shelby M. Taylor, Chairman of the Railroad Commission, to endorse his view that pipelines were common carriers and, therefore, subject to regulation by the Commission. The attempt by Standard Oil to have the ruling reversed by the courts was unsuccessful.¹⁷

Having secured statewide fame through his tilts with Standard Oil and Governor Parker,¹⁸ Huey further enhanced his politically useful record with a series of successful rate cases. The Public Service Commission,¹⁹

¹⁷Louisiana Public Service Commission v. Standard Oil Companies of Louisiana, 154 Louisiana Reports, p. 557.

¹⁸A public statement reflecting unmistakably on the Governor's ancestry resulted in a libel suit against Long. Huey received a suspended sentence and a one dollar fine. Long refused to pay the fine.

¹⁹The Constitution of 1921 created the Public Service Commission to replace the Railroad Commission in regulation of public utilities.

as a result of hearings held in 1920-21, had granted the Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company a twenty per cent rate increase. In 1922, Huey Long, then Chairman of the Public Service Commission,²⁰ reopened the case. The rates were eventually lowered, and since the reductions were made retroactive to the time of Cumberland's 1920 application for increase, a huge refund was assured to all telephone subscribers.²¹ Overnight the Kingfish was a state hero. He scored on other fronts as well, lowering the rates on the Southwestern Gas and Electric Company, of all intrastate railroads, and of the Shreveport street-cars.²²

By the election year of 1923, Huey Long was a personal force in state politics, assured of support if he should decide to "make the race for governor."²³ On

²⁰In November of 1921, Chairman John Michael died, and Francis Williams was elected to succeed him. Huey Long became chairman in 1922.

²¹Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company v. Louisiana Public Service Commission, 283 Federal Reporter, p. 265; Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company v. Louisiana Public Service Commission, 260 U. S. 212.

²²Huey P. Long v. City of Shreveport and Shreveport Railroad Company, 151 Louisiana Reports, p. 423.

²³News item in the New Orleans Item-Tribune, January 6, 1923.

his thirtieth birthday,²⁴ following eight months of vague utterances, Long dispelled all doubts when he filed for the highest elective state office.²⁵ In a speech delivered in Shreveport, Huey set forth a broad program: a vast highway construction program, the establishment of criminal courts of appeal, state warehouses for farm produce, natural gas for New Orleans, an increase in the number of schools, state supplied textbooks,²⁶ and the taxation of Standard Oil on a one-hundred-cent dollar.²⁷

In terms of organization and political support Huey placed a poor third behind his two rivals in the campaign of 1924. Henry L. Fuqua, the former manager of Angola State Penitentiary, was backed by the "old" Ring, the Ku Klux Klan, and former Governor J. Y. Sanders. Fiercely anti-Klan, Hewitt L. Bouanchard, the Catholic Lieutenant-Governor under Parker, was supported by the Times-Picayune and the Crescent City's "new" Ring, a splinter group

²⁴ Under the Constitution of 1921, thirty was the minimum age for a gubernatorial candidate.

²⁵ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 31, 1923.

²⁶ News item in the Shreveport Times, September 2, 1923.

²⁷ News items in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, September 7, 8, 19; and December 19, 1923.

backed by Colonel John Sullivan, Colonel John Ewing, the publisher of the Shreveport Times, and his son Robert, publisher of the Baton Rouge States.

The campaign took on a strange appearance in October of 1923 when the Governor voiced his support of the Catholic Bouanchaud, stating that the "great issue is Klan and anti-Klan."²⁸ Long, who claimed membership only in the Elks,²⁹ appealed to the voters to ignore the religious issues and continued to speak for those things he considered to be paramount.³⁰ However, the south Louisiana vote appeared lost when Swords R. Lee, a prominent Klan leader, spoke out in favor of his nephew--Huey Long.³¹

Huey, in the tradition of politics, forecasted victory, barring rain, which would "mud-out" his backwoods voters. He realized, however, that the state was divided by a religious conflict which left him out of the running

²⁸ News items in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, October 28 and 30, 1923.

²⁹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 31, 1923.

³⁰ News items in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, September 7, 18, 19; October 6; and December 19, 1923.

³¹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, December 19, 1923.

in many places.³²

The January primary placed Fuqua and Bouanchaud in the runoff, as shown in these results:³³

	Orleans	Other	State	% State
Long	12,187	61,798	73,985	30.9
Fuqua	33,194	48,188	81,382	34.0
Bouanchaud	23,300	60,862	84,162	35.1
Total	68,681	170,848	239,329	

"On the night preceding the election, a heavy down-pour of rain fell in every part of the state."³⁴ Huey's defeat, however, was not caused only, or even mainly, by muddy roads.³⁵ Huey, a Baptist uplander, from the region of greatest Klan power, had attempted to straddle the issue and thereby gained the judgment of many that he was a Klan candidate. In the first primary a distinct sectional

³²Long, op. cit., p.77.

³³Computed from Compilation of Primary Election Returns of the Democratic Party, State of Louisiana, held January 15, 1924.

³⁴Long, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

³⁵C.f., Stan Optowsky, The Longs of Louisiana (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 41; and Reinhard B. Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), p. 244.

voting pattern was evident. Basically, south Louisiana had voted for the Catholic Bouanchaud, while Long and Fuqua had fought for north Louisiana and the Florida parishes. For the most part, the state vote-pattern did not repeat that of 1896, nor did it forecast the Long victory of 1928. The basic reasons for Huey's defeat, therefore, lay in the realm of religion, rather than class, issues in the campaign, together with the fact that two Protestants were running against one Catholic.³⁶ It was only due to Fuqua's strength in New Orleans [Orleans Parish] that he, instead of Long was in the runoff.

In the runoff held February 19, 1923, although Long refused to endorse either candidate, the bulk of his rural vote went to Fuqua, who received 57.8 per cent of the total vote cast.³⁷

The lesson of the 1924 campaign was obvious to Long and the array of opportunists who came over to his side during the next three years. If he could keep the north Louisiana hill-parish following and make alliances in the Crescent City and south Louisiana, his election in 1928

³⁶Martin, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁷Computed from Compilation of Primary Election Returns of the Democratic Party, State of Louisiana, held February 19, 1924.

would be guaranteed.³⁸

Long was renominated as Third District member of the Public Service Commission in September, 1924. He polled 83.9 per cent of the total vote cast and carried all twenty-eight of the parishes in that north Louisiana district. In the same primary, Huey supported the renomination of United States Senator Joseph E. Ransdell, a south Louisiana Catholic, who defeated L. E. Thomas, Mayor of Shreveport. In the New Orleans mayoralty primary of 1925, Huey joined the Colonel Sullivan's "new" Ring in support of Paul H. Maloney against Martin Behrman.³⁹ Perceptive Behrmanites charged that Maloney was being backed "to make Huey Long governor in 1928."⁴⁰

Long's chance to win converts in the south came in the 1926 Senatorial campaign when he backed the incumbent, a south Louisiana Catholic "wet," Edwin S. Broussard. The

³⁸Leo Glenn Douthit, "The Governorship of Huey P. Long" (unpublished Master's thesis, Tulane University, New Orleans, 1947), p. 37.

³⁹Martin Berhman, mayor of New Orleans for twenty-four years, died shortly after taking office, in 1925, and was succeed by Maloney.

⁴⁰Hermann B. Deutsch, "The Kingdom of the Kingfish," New Orleans Item, August 6, 1939.

Senator was opposed by a Ring⁴¹ "warhorse," Jared Y. Sanders, an east Louisiana Protestant "dry," with reputed strength in north Louisiana.⁴² For twenty-one days Long stumped in all parts of the state for "Cousin Ed," making four to six speeches per day. To keep from alienating his own upland supporters, Huey ducked the prohibition question and centered his attack on Sander's advocacy of toll bridges for the New Orleans area.⁴³ The Senator was re-elected by a slender margin,⁴⁴ and Huey claimed credit for saving the Broussard election.⁴⁵ However, it was the narrowness of the victory, rather than the high degree of support accorded him by those north Louisiana parishes loyal to Long in 1924, that allowed Huey to accent his contribuion to the outcome.

⁴¹The Ring was avidly "wet." News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 9, 1926.

⁴²Long, op. cit., p. 82.

⁴³Sanders had supported Act 141 of 1924 which adopted a toll bridge policy for the state highway system. On February 26, 1925, in negotiations between the Highway Commission and the Pontchartrain Bridge Company, to whom the franchise was granted, the company was represented by Jared Y. Sanders.

⁴⁴The official returns showed Broussard with 84,041 votes and Sanders with 80,562.

⁴⁵Long, op. cit., p. 83.

While Long worked to extend his influence by his own efforts, the Fuqua administration indirectly helped his chances for the 1928 gubernatorial election. By enacting three anti-Klan measures, the Louisiana Legislature put an end to the religious issues which confined Long's appeal to north Louisiana in 1924. On the other hand, Governor Henry Fuqua died on October 11, 1929, a short time after the Senatorial campaigns. He was succeeded by Lieutenant-Governor O. H. Simpson, who had also supported the re-election of Broussard. Shortly after assuming office, Simpson, who had gubernatorial ambitions which rivaled those of Huey, stole Long's thunder when he announced a free-bridge policy and let contracts for the construction of piers upon which free bridges could be rested.⁴⁶

In the 1928 gubernatorial campaign, neither of Long's two opponents, singly, represented a threat to the Kingfish's chances of victory. Governor Simpson was the first to announce his entrance into the gubernatorial race.⁴⁷ Two days later, Congressman Riley J. Wilson, political ally of former Governor Jared Y. Sanders, was

⁴⁶ Long, op. cit., pp. 90-93.

⁴⁷ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 6, 1927.

nominated at an Alexandria political rally.⁴⁸

The main concern to the Kingfish was the likelihood that his opponents would join forces so that, if he failed to secure a majority over both in the first primary, "common cause would be made by both the Wilson and Simpson forces behind whichever candidate was in the second contest."⁴⁹ To counter the threat of this alliance, Huey employed his "start a row in the opposition" tactic. As Long recorded in his autobiography, he found

some traitor in our camp who was willing to go to the Simpson crowd and advise them that this other gang [Wilson] was working to ruin their candidate.⁵⁰

The tactic was employed so effectively that any possibility of co-operation between his rivals was not likely. Long poured all the oil on the fire that he could, with excellent results.⁵¹ He dismissed Wilson's "flood record" with ridicule: "Wilson has been in the Congress fourteen years, and this year [1927] the water went fourteen feet higher than ever," which, according to Kingfish Long, gave him a flood record on the basis of one

⁴⁸ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 9, 1927.

⁴⁹ Long, op. cit., p. 101.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

⁵¹ Ibid.

foot of high water a year.⁵² Governor Simpson was assaulted for his alleged padding of the ranks of the Conservation Commission, "a coon-chasin' an' possum-watchin' brigade, that does its job cruising around in a fancy boat in the Gulf."⁵³

Long, the last to file in the race,⁵⁴ opened his gubernatorial campaign in the hostile city of Alexandria. Under the banner "EVERY MAN A KING, BUT NO MAN WEARS A CROWN" Huey and his running mate, Dr. Paul Cyr,⁵⁵ presented their platform: free textbooks; free bridges; permanent all-weather roads; natural gas for larger towns and cities; development of inland waterways; vocational training for the deaf, dumb, and blind; and enactment of an occupational tax on Standard Oil Company.⁵⁶

The Kingfish's campaign was probably unequalled in

⁵²Quoted by Martin, op. cit., p. 41.

⁵³Quoted by Harnett T. Kane, Louisiana Hayride: The American Rehearsal for Dictatorship, 1928-1940 (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1941), p. 56.

⁵⁴News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 6, 1927.

⁵⁵Dr. Paul Cyr, a dentist of Jeanerette, was a Creole Catholic who had been on the Bouanchaud ticket in 1924.

⁵⁶News item in The Shreveport Times, August 4, 1927; and Long, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

Louisiana's political history. "His meetings were a cross between a New Orleans carnival parade, a revival meeting, and a Saturday sandlot baseball game."⁵⁷ Huey stumped in remote places that had never seen a gubernatorial contender and made speeches on a schedule that amazed his opponents. As his greatest strength lay in the rural sections, it was to them that he directed his campaign.

Huey's melodramatic speech to a Cajun audience projected the campaign of 1928 into the realm of class struggle within Louisiana. His attacks and promises fused in an emotional appeal to the lower-class whites and Negroes to "kickout the old gang" and corporations:

And it is here under this oak where Evangeline waited for her lover, Gabriel, who never came. This oak is an immortal spot, made so by Longfellow's poem, but Evangeline is not the only one who has waited here in disappointment.

Where are the schools that you have waited for your children to have, that have never come? Where are the roads and highways that you sent your money to build, and are no nearer now than ever before? Where are the institutions to care for the sick and disabled? Evangeline wept bitter tears in her disappointment, but it lasted through only one lifetime. Your tears have lasted for generations. Give me a chance to dry the eyes of those who still weep here.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Kane, op. cit., p. 56.

⁵⁸Long, op. cit., p. 99.

Huey's victory in the January primary was of a personal nature. Long carried with him into office only Lieutenant-Governor Paul Cyr and Treasurer H. B. Conner. There were one hundred members in the House of Representatives and thirty-nine members of the Senate. The Kingfish, in his autobiography, reported that only eighteen members of the House and nine members of the Senate had supported his gubernatorial candidacy.⁵⁹

The January primary placed Long and Wilson in the runoff, as shown in these results:⁶⁰

	Orleans	Other	State	% State
Long	17,819	109,023	126,842	43.9
Wilson	38,244	43,503	81,747	28.3
Simpson	22,387	58,002	80,326	27.8
Total	78,387	210,528	288,915	

Simpson and Wilson, however, both withdrew from the race, eliminating the need for a runoff, and Long was nominated as the Democratic candidate for governor.

A comparison of the vote-pattern in Figure 2, page 16,

⁵⁹ Long, op. cit. p. 107.

⁶⁰ Computed from Compilation of Primary Election Returns of the Democratic Party, State of Louisiana, held January 17, 1928.

LOUISIANA 1928

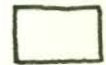
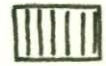
% RANGE

73.6 - 62.3

61.6 - 54.4

53.6 - 43.3

42.7 - 15.9



Proportion of parish
vote cast for Huey
Long, 1928 Democratic
gubernatorial
primary

Statewide % : 43

(From Heard and
Strong, Southern

Primaries and
Elections)

FIGURE 3.

and Figure 3, page 44, will support the thesis of a class struggle continuing in Louisiana. In 1928, Long held the northern uplands and attracted only a six per cent increase in the New Orleans vote over that of 1924. The increase in strength came largely from the backing afforded him by the many small-farmer areas of south Louisiana. The termination of the Ku Klux Klan issue, coupled with Long's "politicking" from 1924 to 1927, had allowed class appeal to overcome the sectionalism based on religious differences.⁶¹ The class revolution⁶² of 1928 had its basis in Louisiana's past. But the hopes of the "old gang," the urban-planter alliance, Standard Oil, and others that the latest class movement would also be abortive were short lived.

⁶¹ Allan P. Sindler, Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), p. 55.

⁶² Carlton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long (Philadelphia: V. B. Lippencott Company, 1935), pp. 21-27.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS: INAUGURATION TO IMPEACHMENT

Huey Long promised big changes in both of his campaigns. "He promised big, partly because that was his nature and partly because a big promised that took in the interests of a large number of people was good strategy."¹ However, it seemed doubtful to supporters, opponents, and disinterested observers that he would be successful. The Kingfish met unreasoning and unscrupulous resistance from the "old gang." The announcement of his principle demands in 1928 led to an attempt in the next year to impeach him. The impeachment unmistakably hardened Long, and the tactics of the opposition and his own tactics to overcome theirs induced in him a measure of cynicism about the democratic process. According to Key, however, the Kingfish

is not to be dismissed as a mere rabble-rouser or as a leader of a gang of boodlers. Nor can he be described by convenient label: fascist, communist. He brought to his career a streak of genius, yet in his program and tactics he was indigenous to Louisiana as pine trees and petroleum.²

The Governor-elect did not wait for inauguration to

¹ T. Harry Williams, Romance and Realism in Southern Politics (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 76.

² V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 157.

launch his program. As recorded in his autobiography, Long asked Governor Simpson "to begin operation of free ferries parallel to the toll bridges immediately."³

The Louisiana Legislature met in the Capitol at Baton Rouge on May 14, 1928, one week before Huey Long's inauguration. By an arrangement reached between his forces and those elected on the Simpson ticket, the Kingfish was able to have his captains, John B. Fournet and Philip H. Gilbert, elected Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore, respectively.⁴

On May 21, 1928, in the doubtless apocryphal inaugural address, Long stated:

If in the course of the next four years I shall have been able to protect, safeguard and advance the interests of the same state, to harmonize and coordinate our forces of labor and industry, agriculture and commerce. . . . Then, I, in pride of my accomplishment, regardless of whom I may please or offend, can write "finis" to the political career. . . .⁵

The Kingfish's unexpected initial success before the inauguration was a signal for bolder and more far-

³Huey P. Long, Every Man a King: The Autobiography of Huey P. Long (New Orleans: National Book Company, 1933), p. 109.

⁴Louisiana House Journal, 1928 (Baton Rouge: 1928), pp. 4-5; Louisiana Senate Journal, 1928 (Baton Rouge: 1928), and Long, op. cit., p. 109-11.

⁵The full text of the address is in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 22, 1928.

reaching operations afterwards. The Governor proposed, what he termed, "legislation to strengthen the hand of the administration."⁶ In his attempt to break the New Orleans bloc, Long organized the Legislature by "personally dictating"⁷ all committee appointments.⁸

Two weeks after the election, Long delivered a broadside against the New Orleans Ring. The Democratic State Committee assembled in the Crescent City in February to call a convention to select representatives for the Democratic National Convention. The choice was usually based upon the strength of the factions in the Legislature, where Long was weak and where the Ring held a sizable bloc. Long and a political ally, Harvey G. Fields, the Committee Chairman, found that the Constitution of 1921 did not specifically call for a convention. They had the State Committee itself name the delegation. A Longite slate was selected, omitting representatives of the New Orleans machine and the urban-planter alliance.⁹

⁶ Long, op. cit., p. 109.

⁷ Hermann B. Deustch, "Kingdom of the Kingfish," New Orleans Item, August 10, 1939, p. 12a.

⁸ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 13-15.

⁹ Deustch, op. cit., p. 13a.

The Governor's two major goals were to secure the state's patronage by securing control of the various boards and to successfully launch his program of legislation to fulfill his campaign promises. Long's impatient efforts led him to violate the usual precedents and proprieties of the office. He invaded the floor of the House and the Senate to line up backing for his bills and hastened procedures by giving instructions to his supporters.¹⁰ With the help of the Simpson-ticket forces he managed to muster a majority in the Legislature, although they did not align with him on all occasions. At times, threats of desertion caused him to avoid combat on an issue he favored and at other times actual desertion caused bills to die.

Despite his maneuvering, constant bickering and a mass of bills introduced by the opposition forces clogged the legislative calendar and made it impossible to force consideration on Long's important proposals. The Kingfish finally evaded the dilemma: he had the administration floor leaders move for first passage on every bill as fast as its number appeared. The calendar was cleared in a few hours, while the opposition watched helplessly. "I later," Long

¹⁰ News item in the New York Times, July 19, 1928.

wrote, "vetoed the objectionable bills by the score."¹¹

To fulfill his campaign pledges it was necessary for Long to develop sources of strong financial backing. To raise money for the institutions for the deaf, dumb, and blind, the charity hospital, and the public schools, the Governor proposed a carbon black¹² tax of four cents per pound.¹³ The free textbooks were to be provided by an increase in the severance tax on such natural resources as lumber, salt, gas, and oil.¹⁴ Another bill provided for a constitutional amendment, to be submitted to the voters, for doubling the two-cent tax on gasoline. The new tax-rate would make possible the retirement of a bond issue of \$30,000,000 which was earmarked for hardsurfacing of highways and the construction of free bridges.¹⁵

The legislation met with a vast amount of entrenched opposition. The carbon black and oil interests voiced

¹¹ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 529-82.

¹² Carbon black was made by wastefully burning natural gas against tin.

¹³ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 446-47.

¹⁴ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 352-53, 412.

¹⁵ Ibid.

strong opposition to the proposal affecting them.¹⁶ As Long recorded in his autobiography:

The demonstration staged by the friends of the Standard Oil Company and its allies against the additional tax on oil resulted in a frenzied session . . . [with] the combined opposition of the public press, of the chambers of commerce and boards of trade, aided about the cause by the corporation lobbyists.¹⁷

In spite of the fierce opposition, Long scored a limited success on the plan for a four-cent tax on carbon black. The clash was so strong that the tax was reduced to one-half a cent per pound, even though many doubted that the revenues would be sufficient.¹⁸

Another of Governor Long's major accomplishments in the 1928 regular legislative session was the enactment of the free textbook law. The necessary funds were supplied by an increase in the severance tax on natural resources based on the quantity-of-product severed, rather than upon value, as under existing law. Although the Constitution of 1921 expressly prohibited state aid to "private or sectarian schools," Long's plan was designed to make all elementary and high school students--in private, public, and parochial schools--the beneficiaries of free

¹⁶Kane, op. cit., p. 65

¹⁷Long, op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁸Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 446-47.

textbooks. With characteristic originality, the Kingfish ducked the 1921 constitutional prohibition by adopting the argument that the state was supplying the textbooks to the students, not the schools, and was merely using the schools as convenient distribution centers.¹⁹ The law was at once taken to the courts, but in a ruling of national importance, the United States Supreme Court upheld the textbook law.²⁰

While it may be properly observed that the free textbook law was politically wise and used to cement the loyalty of many south Louisiana Catholics to Longism,²¹ it must also be observed that the law was a basic element in the Long philosophy. In his "concentration of wealth" letter Long stated that the "greatest cause for industrial unrest was that of education."²² When the Kingfish took office Louisiana ranked first among the states in the percentage of illiterates within the population.²³ As late as 1940, after

¹⁹ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 412-13.

²⁰ Cochran v. Louisiana State Board of Education, 281 U. S. 370 (1930).

²¹ Sindler, op. cit., p. 59.

²² C.f. ante, p. 28.

²³ Computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935).

Among Long's more successful measures was a bill which provided for a constitutional amendment, to be submitted to the voters, for the increase in the gasoline tax. It was attacked because it was said that there was no guarantee that the funds, which were to be expended in highway and bridge construction, would not merely be used to increase the payroll of the Highway Commission for political purposes. Others declared that the proposal was extravagant and that the state was unable to assume such a financial burden. The bill was passed after a lengthy discussion, partly because many Solons believed that the voters would not approve the tax increase.³⁰ Another administration bill which authorized a \$15,000,000 bond issue for the building of seawalls on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain at New Orleans, also won a majority.³¹

Long's objective of gaining control of the major patronage of the state also met with success. His first official act as governor had been to appoint new members to the contract-letting Highway Commission, which was already under control of the executive department. The new chair-

³⁰Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 188-89, 412-13; and the New York Times, July 19, 1928.

³¹Acts, State of Louisiana, 1928, pp. 34-42.

man was Long's Winn Parish neighbor, Oscar Kelly "OK" Allen.³² As promised during the campaign, an investigation of the Commission was begun and the former head of the organization, Major Frank T. Payne, was charged with the violation of state codes regulating the expenditure of state funds by District Attorney John Oden.³³

The Kingfish demanded the resignation of other officials answerable to him and set in motion a plan to oust others who opposed him. While the press and opposition cried "spoilsman," it became increasingly clear that Long was determined to have the support of men in major positions who would not hamper his program.

One measure replaced nine members of the Orleans Parish Levee Board with a five member group appointed by the governor. The Fuqua and Simpson forces were replaced by Longites and opponents of the Ring. The bill also eliminated the New Orleans mayor as an ex-officio member of the Board.³⁴

Another attack was leveled against the State Board

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News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 28, 1928.

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News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 3, 1928.

³⁴

Acts, State of Louisiana, 1928, pp. 107-08.

a broad educational program was begun, 39.6 per cent of all white males under twenty-five had never received more than four years of schooling.²⁴ In no small way, this condition was fostered by the role of the Catholic Church in the state's educational arrangement.²⁵ Thus, the free textbook law was not merely a device to attract a Catholic bloc-vote, but a means of modernizing the entire educational structure within the state.

Opposition to the free textbook law centered in the anti-Long city of Shreveport in Caddo Parish, the only parish to oppose the issuance of \$30,000,000 of bonds for highway construction purposes. The forces were led by a long-time political enemy, Mayor L. E. Thomas. "This is a rich section of the state," said Thomas, "we are not going to be humiliated or degraded by having it advertised that our children had to be given books free."²⁶ At the same time, the Baptist State Convention, meeting in Shreveport, saw in the law a religious issue and passed a resolution condemning it.

²⁴ Computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945).

²⁵ Key, op. cit., pp. 157-58.

²⁶ Long, op. cit., pp. 114-15.

Long bided his time until conditions were in his favor. A delegation from Shreveport called on the Governor to ask his support for a project that would be important to Shreveport's economy. The federal government wanted to build an airport for its Third Attack Wing adjacent to the city. All that was needed was an eighty-acre plot, which was under state control. It would be a paper transaction for the state to deed the land to the city so the requirements for the federal agreement could be met. Long, however since Shreveport continued to reject the free textbooks, maintained that "people so well off don't need an airport."²⁷

An act had been introduced and passed by the Legislature in May authorizing cities to acquire such land "within or without" the parish and donate it to the federal government. However, in the official recording of the law, the words "or without" had been omitted.²⁸ The problem was solved when Caddo Parish agreed to accept the free textbooks if the Governor would call a supplemental session to correct the error.²⁹

²⁷ Long, op. cit., p. 115.

²⁸ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 242-44; and Acts, State of Louisiana, 1928 (Baton Rouge: 1928), pp. 26-27.

²⁹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, December 10-12, 1928.

of Health. Long dismissed the President, Dr. Oscar Dowling, who was accused of wasting fifty thousand dollars per year. The doctor, however, refused to vacate his office. The administration, therefore, passed a bill ending Dowling's term of office on August 24, 1928, instead of 1932.³⁵

Dowling appealed to Attorney-General Percy Saint, who declared that the removal was not legal.³⁶ However, Dr. Dowling was "forced" out of the office and replaced by a Longite, Dr. Joseph A. O'Hara. The Louisiana State Supreme Court upheld the new appointment in January of the following year.³⁷

The assault on the Conservation Commission resulted in a powerful lever in the manipulation of state patronage. Dr. V. K. Irion refused to vacate his office on the Dowling plea of unconstitutionality. Opponents claimed that Long was undoing the work of many years of depoliticalizing the body. To eliminate the type of hinderance caused by Irion and Dowling, an administration bill was passed giving the Governor the power to file "intrusion-in-office" suits

³⁵ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, pp. 663-64.

³⁶ Opinions of the Attorney-General of Louisiana, May 1, 1928, to April 30, 1930 (New Orleans: 1930), pp. 37-39.

³⁷ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, January 8, 1929.

without the aid or consent of the Attorney-General if any persons "obstructed the operation" of a state board.³⁸

Although the Governor achieved an unexpected degree of success, he was slowed by many setbacks. One administration measure which failed would have given the Governor the authority to reorganize the New Orleans Charity Hospital complex and to achieve control of the Crescent City's Court House Commission.³⁹ Although a long delay in the higher courts was obvious, Long's bill to appoint additional Court of Appeal justices did not win a majority.⁴⁰ Long likewise failed to have approved bills which provided for the replacement of seven Orleans Parish tax assessors with one man, replacement of the Orleans Parish Ring-backed sheriff, and a \$35,000 appropriation to boost the size of the state militia.⁴¹

The Legislature, in regular session, added 297 laws to the statute books, but certain others were vetoed by the Governor. The opposition focused much attention upon the cattle-tick eradication bill which was vetoed by Governor

³⁸ Acts, State of Louisiana, 1928, pp. 117-18; and news item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 2, 1928.

³⁹ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, p. 222.

⁴⁰ Louisiana House Journal, 1928, p. 429-37.

⁴¹ News item in the New York Times, July 29, 1928.

Long. Many said the measure was unworkable and Long claimed that he feared bodily harm would result from forced cattle dipping. He did not believe the law would be workable in a state which was still "open range" by law. In a lengthy and detailed veto message, Long explained why he favored the move. "Some little reflection on the score of human psychology had better be made before we make a move that requires the state militia."⁴² However, the opposition claimed that the only reason that Long opposed the bill was that the opposition had instituted it and was afraid that enactment might eliminate his following of small farmers with whom the bill was popular.⁴³

An appropriation of \$20,400, earmarked for the Conservation Commission, was also vetoed. Critics claimed that Long was motivated by a desire for personal revenge against Chairman Francis Williams, who had broken with Long during the 1928 gubernatorial campaign and had become a Ring leader.⁴⁴ Long stated that the Commission had funds available and had "performed practically no service of benefit and use and is not now performing any practical

⁴² News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 14, 1928.

⁴³ News item in the New York Times, July 29, 1928.

⁴⁴ Kane, op. cit., p. 65.

service to the public." It should, therefore, he replied, be made to exist "on the sum which was approximately the amount the same Commission operated on when it admittedly was of benefit to the public." Williams' bitter response was that Long had "no more scruples than the assassin who cowardly conceals himself in the dark and strikes his adversary from behind."⁴⁵

Two other bills introduced by anti-Long forces were killed by the Governor's veto. One measure provided that delegates to the national conventions must be picked only by state convention. Another limited the salary of the Highway Commission attorney and required his residence to be in Baton Rouge.⁴⁶

Following his vetoes, Long suffered many assaults from various publications, the Nation attacked:

Every proposal for legislation, every acceptance of a bill, every appointment to office, every public act of Mr. Long, has been destined to create for him a slave-like political machine to thwart the will of the people, mock the legislature and circumvent the laws The result has been, to spread the weight of spoils politics everywhere.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 14, 1928.

⁴⁶ Hermann B. Deustch, "Kingdom of the Kingfish," New Orleans Item, August 10, 1939.

⁴⁷ George Goad, "I'm the Constitution of Louisiana," Nation, CXXVIII (1929), 418-19.

In contrast, one of Long's most critical biographers stated:

Not Huey, but the political system was to be blamed. Theoretically, the various boards had been previously taken out of politics. But as a single party and a single machine had dominated Louisiana for decades, all governmental agencies were an integral part of the corrupt system. Non-politicalizing the boards in effect had merely permitted Ring henchmen to enjoy perfect job immunity, creating foci of permanent political power. Though not subject to the spoils system of each governor, the boards were all part of a complicated regeme of a vicious political elite tied up with the large corporations and underworld. Huey had to do exactly what he did, or else be another meek corporation and underworld puppet like his predecessors. Whether his purposes were genius, whether the reforms he espoused were worthy and important, are separate questions entirely.⁴⁸

In an attempt to fulfill a campaign promise, natural gas for New Orleans, the Kingfish set off another controversy. Natural gas had been piped from north Louisiana to within a few miles of the Crescent City. But in 1921, New Orleans had granted New Orleans Public Service, Inc., (NOPSI) a franchise which stipulated that the city could purchase the properties of that utility company at a specified rate and operate them under municipal ownership. By 1928, NOPSI still monopolized the power to city consumers, including artificial gas at the high rate of \$1.35

⁴⁸ Carlton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long (Philadelphia: V. B. Lippencott Company, 1935), p. 92.

per thousand cubic feet (MCF). Although many interests sought the opportunity to sell New Orleans natural gas from the fields in the Monroe area at a cheaper rate, NOPSI had convinced the Commission Council that such offers were not practical. Governor Long's verbal assault, unlike those of earlier governors, was followed by direct action.⁴⁹ The Kingfish had Senator Fernandez of Orleans Parish introduce a battery of measures authorizing the Commission Council of New Orleans to issue \$50,000,000 in bonds for the purchase of NOPSI's properties and instituting enabling acts for the operation of the utility service.⁵⁰ With the bills as leverage, Long, in an ill-worded attempt to squelsh opposition by the Ring, said:

A deck has 52 cards and in Baton Rouge I hold all 52 of them and can shuffle and deal as I please. I can have bills passed or I can kill them. I'll give you [NOPSI] until Saturday to decide.⁵¹

On Saturday, June 25, NOPSI agreed to allow natural gas into the city at a consumer rate of \$0.90 per thousand cubic feet (MCF) plus a \$0.25 monthly meter charge.⁵²

⁴⁹Beals, op. cit., p. 73; and Long, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

⁵⁰Louisiana Senate Journal, 1928, pp. 219, 445-47.

⁵¹News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 26, 1928.

⁵²Hermann B. Deutsch, op. cit., p. 13a.

The legislative session ended in July with a general triumph for the Kingfish. Long had been able to obtain most of the important laws he had sought. He had been handed several setbacks but, for the most part, they were minor. The major exception was the request for the occupational license tax on the petroleum industry, which would have been used to finance improvements in the state's school system, hospital complex, and mental wards.

Following legislative adjournment, the Kingfish was faced with the problem of securing backing for his constitutional amendments which increased the gasoline tax and endorsed the road construction bond issue. The bills had been passed by the Legislature, but they had to stand the test of ratification at the polls on November 16, the same day Hoover faced Al Smith in the national election. Due to the religious issue, Hoover had a considerable following in Louisiana, and party captains felt the need of conducting an active campaign in the normally Democratic state. Long, therefore, campaigned during the summer months with a dual purpose.⁵³

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Thomas Harris, The Kingfish, Huey P. Long, Dictator (New York: Pelican Publishing Company, 1938), pp. 44-46.

The principle criticisms against the amendment to raise the gasoline tax was that there was no safety check to guarantee proper handling and expenditure of the funds. The New Orleans machine claimed that Long was being handed a "political war chest." To silence his opponents, the Kingfish announced on August 22, 1928, that if the amendments were ratified, he would name a "road bond advisory committee of eleven outstanding citizens to supervise the handling of funds." The names he mentioned were described as "unimpeachable" by both factions.⁵⁴

On August 29, 1928, the two largest commercial and civic organizations in New Orleans, the Young Men's Business Club and the Association of Commerce, voted approval of the bond issue in spite of Ring opposition.⁵⁵

The Ring demanded a special legislative session to be called to legalize the Road Committee by penning it into the act. The Kingfish agreed to this, if the Ring would, in turn, back the amendments during the special session and later at the polls in November. The Ring attempted to duck the issue by answering in an ambiguously worded message and on September 19, 1928, issued an unmistakable statement of

⁵⁴ Hermann B. Deutsch, "Kingdom of the Kingfish," New Orleans Item, August 14, 1939.

⁵⁵ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 30, 1928.

opposition.⁵⁶ Governor Long sent the text of the proposed addition to the amendment to all members of the Legislature with the request that they inform him whether or not they would vote for it. The Ring voted "No." Their bloc-vote made it impossible to secure the necessary two-thirds vote for a constitutional amendment. Therefore, the Governor announced that no special legislative session would be called.⁵⁷

On November 16, the voters of the state approved both constitutional amendments with an overwhelming majority. In the Crescent City, only two of the seventeen wards rejected the amendments; one ward by only five votes and the other by only three votes.⁵⁸

Jefferson and St. Bernard parishes, to the south of New Orleans, were the Mecca of gambling and vice, operating under the indulgent eyes of corrupt local officials.⁵⁹ Traditionally, these parishes had gone their way, un-

⁵⁶ Deustch, loc. cit.

⁵⁷ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 23-October 23, 1928; and Long, op. cit., pp. 117-18.

⁵⁸ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 17 and 18, 1928.

⁵⁹ Martin, op. cit., p. 52.

challenged by state officials. The new Governor was urged by the New Orleans Association of Commerce and several state newspapers to muster an attack on the illegal gaming. Long issued a characteristically strong statement to the Times-Picayune:

I warn them now that if gambling continues in New Orleans . . . the state militia will patrol the streets of the city. We are not going to stand for open lawlessness in the New Orleans area during the four years that I am governor.⁶⁰

The edict went unheeded and gambling continued in St. Bernard Parish, with the newspaper boasting of the fact.⁶¹ A few days later a detachment of state militia was mobilized to raid gaming houses in St. Bernard Parish to serve, in Long's words, "as a warning to all gamblers in the New Orleans area."⁶² The troopers broke up tables, ripped out roulette wheels and "slots," and confiscated a reported \$25,000.⁶³

The St. Bernard Parish Sheriff, L. H. Neraux, hastily

⁶⁰ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 1, 1928; and the New York Times, August 13, 1928.

⁶¹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 10, 1928.

⁶² News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 12, 1928.

⁶³ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 11, 1928.

gave approval: region that was largely anti-Long:

He [Governor Long] and the people of the state may rest assured that even if I have to abandon my weekend vacation, there will be no repetition of lawbreaking in the parish [St. Bernard] while I occupy the office of sheriff.⁶⁴

Many of the state's newspapers denounced Governor Long for the raids, and state Attorney-General Percy Saint, in an official ruling, declared that the raids were illegal because the Governor had not declared martial law before calling out the militia.⁶⁵ The Kingfish replied that "no one had asked him [Saint] for his opinion."⁶⁶ The Governor continued:

We have paid no attention to, and will pay no attention to any opinion of the Attorney-General protecting the gambling interests, or which would make it impossible for us to enforce the law of the state.⁶⁷

There were three possible motives for the Governor's raids on the gambling establishments: a political move to please his predominately Baptist, hill-parish voters;

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News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 12, 1928.

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Opinions of the Attorney-General of Louisiana, May 1, 1928, to April 30, 1930, pp. 51-53; and the New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 18, 1928.

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Quoted in Martin, op. cit., p. 53.

67

News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 19 and 20, 1928.

an attack on a region that was largely anti-Long; or an attempt to cut off gambling funds to the New Orleans Ring, in the fight against Long. Whatever the case, little gain came from the raids. They stirred up the opposition in the lower parishes and contributed to the growing belief that Long was a dangerous "Tin-pot Napoleon."⁶⁸

Following the November approval of the constitutional amendments, Long called a special six-day session to meet on December 10, 1928. The Legislature was to pass enabling acts to permit highway construction to begin immediately. Attorney-General Saint requested that the Governor include in the call an anti-gambling and racing law, since the present laws were "inadequate." The Governor replied by stating that he could not understand why Saint wanted additional laws, "when he won't enforce the laws we now have and keeps interfering with me when I try to enforce them."⁶⁹

On the first day of the special session the Governor spoke to the Legislature:

I urge you to speed up your work, suspend your rules to advance bills, conclude your business and adjourn within the six day time limit placed on

December 11, 1928.

⁶⁸ Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁶⁹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, December 2, 1928.

the session.⁷⁰ With the will of the voters clearly shown in the November polling, the Legislature had little choice in the matter. The rules were suspended and the bill was passed in record time.⁷¹

Louisiana's most sensational murder case alienated Governor Long and two powerful state figures, Lieutenant-Governor Paul Cyr and publisher John Ewing. Dr. Thomas E. LeBoeuf and Mrs. Ada Dreher had been convicted of the murder of Mrs. Dreher's husband James. The two were sentenced to be hanged. Thus, Mrs. Dreher would be the first white woman in the history of the state to go to the gallows. Colonel Ewing's Daily States and the Shreveport Times suggested clemency, a commuted sentence. Under pressure, Long did grant a reprieve from December 21, 1928, until January 5, 1929. In a rare stand with the Governor, the hostile Times-Picayune endorsed the Governor's refusal to commute the sentence: "We think the Governor's reasoning and

⁷⁰ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, December 11, 1928.

⁷¹ Louisiana House Journal, Third Extra Session, 1928, (Baton Rouge: 1928); Louisiana Senate Journal, Third Extra Session, 1928 (Baton Rouge: 1928); and the New Orleans Times-Picayune, December 14-19, 1928.

decision are alike sound. We honor him for the courage he displayed."⁷² Lieutenant-Governor Cyr, however, a personal friend of Mrs. Dreher, roared, "How long have I been humiliated by having to deal with this man," when Long refused to commute the sentence.⁷³ He further claimed that the Governor had "double-crossed" him.⁷⁴ He stated that the Governor had agreed to leave the state so that he, as acting governor, could issue requisite commutation of sentence warrants.⁷⁵

The convicted murders were executed on February 1, 1929, after the first degree murder charge was upheld by the State Supreme Court. In public statements, Lieutenant-Governor Cyr and Attorney-General Saint, who had also entered the fight against Long, made it appear that the Governor was personally responsible for the executions.

⁷² Editorial in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, January 3, 1929.

⁷³ Quoted in Martin, op. cit., p. 54.

⁷⁴ New Orleans Item dispatch of January 11, 1929: "Franklin, La., Jan. 10--'I'd not only settle the LeBoeuf-Dreher case, but I would pardon the kidnapppers,' Lieutenant-Governor Paul Cyr remarked here this afternoon, upon his return from a futile visit to Baton Rouge, in response to a suggestion that Governor Huey P. Long might have been kidnapped."

⁷⁵ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, January 4, 1929.

Unaware of imminent impeachment, the Kingfish could look back on his first eight months in office with justifiable pride. Although his efforts to extend and consolidate gubernatorial control of patronage met with considerable opposition, the fulfillment of many of his campaign promises had added up to a progressive and free-spending program. That program was opposed and resented by conservatives but fell far short of radicalism.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Sindler, op. cit., p. 61.

Gov. Long finished a special session a month ago, before, the state's affairs were called by a call for another session. This time, Long directed the Legislature to convene on March 10, 1909, for a six-day special session to overcome certain objections raised by the United States Supreme Court to laws he had fostered. The Governor stated that he would also include in the call a provision for

¹Allan F. Sindler, Gov. Long's Louisiana: A Study in Politics, 1920-1926 (Baton Rouge: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), p. 21.

CHAPTER V

CONSERVATIVE COUNTERATTACK

While the anti-Longs termed their position in the tradition of "good government," they were, in fact, more concerned with the outcome of the game of politics than how the game was played. Conservative opposition to Long was translated into impeachment primarily because the Kingfish sought to root his power in the loyalty of the masses of voters. Inevitably, as the lower classes were made aware of their political strength, there would occur a political restructuring disadvantageous to the interests of the upper classes. "The anti-Longs resorted to impeachment in order to prevent a distasteful present from becoming an unbearable future."¹

Having finished a special session a scant two months before, the state's Solons were jolted by a call for another session. This time, Long directed the Legislature to convene on March 18, 1929, for a six-day special session to overcome certain objections raised by the United States Supreme Court to laws he had fostered. The Governor stated that he would also include in the call a provision for

¹ Allan P. Sindler, Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), p. 61.

collecting the state's full share of the inheritance tax as allowed by federal law, a change in the paving laws to facilitate the highway program in Orleans Parish, and "one or two other matters."²

On March 15, 1929, the "other matters" were revealed. The Governor called for legislation levying an occupational tax of five cents a barrel on the refining of oil.³ The funds, he explained, were desperately needed for the educational program, the tuberculous sanitariums, the mental wards, and the institutions for the deaf, dumb, and blind. The Governor continued:

Practically all the business and professions pay a privilege license . . . but such privilege license, up to this time, has not been assessed upon the oil industry of the state. . . . I am hoping that the oil trusts will not make any opposition to this form of license, as they have done to progressive movements before.⁴

There was little doubt that the state's indigents

²News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 4, 1929.

³Ten months earlier, in regular session, Long had introduced his occupational license tax of five cents a barrel of oil, but had withdrawn it in the face of fierce opposition.

⁴News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 16, 1929; and see the full text of the bill in Louisiana House Journal, Fourth Extra Session, 1929 (Baton Rouge: 1929), pp. 9-10.

and public institutions would benefit from the proposals. But there was also the belief that, at least in part, the Kingfish's motives lay in penalizing the Standard Oil Company, the "Octopus" against which he had never ceased to rail. That Standard itself felt it was being singled out as a target was never a question. Standard Oil President D. R. Wells, upon hearing of the special session, immediately came to Baton Rouge, established headquarters in the Hotel Heidelberg and remained for the entire session.

The Kingfish's success in the regular session and in the December special session had perhaps swelled his ego. His call for a special session of only six days, was in itself evidence that he expected little difficulty in getting his measures approved.

As the official proceedings of the state Legislature indicate, the atmosphere had turned "to a white heat."⁵ Chambers for commerce, boards of trade, lawyers, special correspondents, corporation lobbyists, Standard Oil agents, and the ex-office holders of the Ring converged on Baton Rouge. The Standard Oil Company, with 8,000 employees in Baton Rouge alone, announced that it would not meet the tax

⁵Huey P. Long, Every Man a King: The Autobiography of Huey P. Long (New Orleans: National Book Company, 1933), p. 123.

and would close its refineries if pressured.⁶ The anti-Longs saw their chance and enlisted firm support from civic and commercial organizations throughout the state.⁷

The tone of the special session was set when Rabbi Walter Piser refused an invitation to deliver the opening prayer because he "could not call down the blessing of God on such a governor."⁸ To accomplish the Governor's bidding in six days, it would be necessary for the Solons to suspend the legislative rules. However, the necessary two-thirds vote was not secured.⁹ Thus, two days later, his occupational license tax no nearer introduction than it was on the first, Long asked the Legislature to adjourn the session, then promptly called a new one--this time for a more realistic eighteen days, beginning on March 20, 1929.

⁶Harnett T. Kane, Louisiana Hayride: The American Rehearsal for Dictatorship, 1928-1940 (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1941), p. 69.

⁷Communications read into the Louisiana House Journal, Fourth Extra Session, 1929 (Baton Rouge: 1929), pp. 9, 19-20; and Louisiana Senate Journal, Fourth Extra Session, 1929 (Baton Rouge: 1929), pp. 5-6, 9, 14-15.

⁸Stan Optowsky, The Longs of Louisiana (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 46.

⁹Louisiana House Journal, Fourth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 10-11; and Louisiana Senate Journal, Fourth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 11-12.

The business elements of the state, under the leadership of Standard Oil, undoubtedly comprised the major forces in the anti-Long battle. To that core were recruited such political enemies of the Kingfish as his former ally, Ewing, Cyr, Sullivan, the Ring, and the "New" Ring, as well as a flood of opportunistic politicians once pro-Long but now deserting what they believed to be a sinking ship.

On March 20, 1929, the first day of the new session, the House protested Long's personal lobbying on the floor and Jared Y. Sanders, Jr., the son of the former Governor, introduced a resolution condemning Long for "trading votes."¹⁰ On the floor the same day, Lieutenant-Governor Cyr made his sensational accusation: Long had approved the leasing of \$1,800,000 worth of Louisiana oil lands to a Texas oil company at terms grossly unfair to the state and had attempted to bribe Cyr into supporting the occupational license tax.¹¹ Cyr continued by describing Governor Huey P. Long as the

worst political tyrant who ever attempted to rule the state . . . making a fight against the largest

¹⁰Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929 (Baton Rouge: 1929), p. 6; the New York Times, March 22, 1929; and the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 21, 1929.

¹¹Long's approval constituted no more than a routine permission to drill, and the leases in question were transferred in the Parker administration.

industry of Louisiana. If the good Lord will ever forgive me for supporting Huey P. Long, it will take a great load off my conscience.¹²

The Lieutenant-Governor also warned that "from today on I promise to keep as close an eye on the governor as one man can keep on another."¹³

The futility of the session was demonstrated when the Senate created a committee to investigate the needs of the state institutions and the House announced that lengthy hearings would be held. This meant that there would not be enough time left for the enactment of legislation.¹⁴

On March 21, 1929, Governor Long's crude intimidation of the press in the Manship affair was revealed by Charles Manship, publisher of the anti-Long Baton Rouge State Times, in a carefully worded front-page editorial entitled, "This Gentlemen, Is The Way Your Governor Fights."¹⁵ According to Manship, the Governor had warned him that if

¹²News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 21, 1929.

¹³Quoted in Martin, Dynasty: The Longs of Louisiana, p. 57.

¹⁴Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 15-16; Louisiana Senate Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 10-11; and the Times-Picayune, March 21, 1929.

¹⁵Editorial in the Baton Rouge State Times, March 21, 1929.

he persisted in his opposition to the occupational license tax, there would be published "a list of names of the people who are fighting me who have relatives in the insane asylum." Manship continued by noting that he had a brother, Douglas, who was in the East Louisiana Hospital undergoing psychiatric treatment.¹⁶

The legislators were outraged by this low blow. On March 22, Colonel Ewing's Shreveport Journal called for an investigation of the Governor, with a view toward impeachment, in an editorial entitled, "Time to End Tyranny."¹⁷ Two days later a worried Governor was urging Solons to draft their own tax measures to satisfy the financial needs of the state charitable institutions and the schools. But the tide of anti-Long charges continued to rise, culminating in a most grave--or most absurd--accusation which led to events helpful to the forces in favor of impeachment.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Editorial in the Shreveport Journal, March 22, 1929; and Sindler, Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952, p. 62.

At the night session of the Legislature, March 25, 1929, there was "an atmosphere of excitement."¹⁸ The date has become known as "Bloody Monday" in Louisiana history.¹⁹ Representative Cecil Morgan of Shreveport, Caddo Parish, demanded recognition from Speaker Fournet, a Long captain, on a point of personal privilege. It was an open secret that Representative Morgan intended to read an affidavit accusing Governor Long of seeking to arrange the murder of an anti-Long state official, Representative Jared Y. Sanders, Jr., the son of the former Governor.

Speaker Fournet instead recognized a Long stalwart who, having knowledge of the Morgan plot, moved for immediate adjournment sine die. Morgan leaped from his desk, his hand waving a document. "I am speaking, and I will not yield the floor," he yelled. "I have in my hand an affidavit from a Baton Rouge citizen that the Governor has tried to procure the assassination of a member of the House."²⁰

¹⁸News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 24, 1929.

¹⁹The official record gives no indication of the irregularity.

²⁰Quoted in Opotowsky, op. cit., p. 42.

The affidavit, Morgan charged, had been signed by the Kingfish's former bodyguard, "Battling" Bozeman, who had detailed how Long had promised him "many gold dollars" to leave J[ared]. Y. Sanders, Jr., in a ditch.²¹ Even as Morgan spoke, Speaker Fournet banged his gavel. A motion to adjourn the session, made by a Long legislator, had been recognized. The House would vote.

There was bedlam now. Legislators formed a cordon around Representative Morgan and escorted him to the front of the chamber. A torrent of shouts rained through the House, and Speaker Fournet called, "A motion to adjourn sine die is recognized. A vote."

The Representative scurried to their seats to press their buttons on the electric voting machine. On the vote on the adjournment motion, the electric tally board behind the Speaker recorded the individual votes every which way. "Fix! Fix! The machine is fixed!" was the cry. Mason Spencer, a Representative, leaped to the rostrum, seized the gavel from Speaker Fournet's hand, and began pounding wildly. Another climbed up the ladder to the voting machine and then leaped down atop a pocket of angry legislators.

²¹ For the completed text, Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 29-32.

Order was restored only after it was discovered that the voting machine had not been cleared after the last roll call vote.²² The roll was called by voice: 71 votes against adjournment, 9 votes in favor. The House recessed until morning.²³

Bloody Monday ended with the wildest free-for-all in a Louisiana legislative hall since the days of Reconstruction. It also marked the beginning of a political battle that was to shape Louisiana politics for many years.²⁴

The next day the administration backers, now a minority, made attempts to introduce resolutions of adjournment. Speaker Fournet read a formal statement to the House deploring the previous days' malee, acknowledging "his own fault" in the confusion, and explaining the

²²All but the most extreme anti-Longs accept this version of the story. Even the hostile Times-Picayune, March 26, 1929, did, for as Long pointed out, the clerk of the voting machine was a nephew of Senator Ransdell, who was at that time an anti-Long leader.

²³Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, p. 41.

²⁴This study of Bloody Monday is based on Martin, op. cit., pp. 58-60; Sindler, op. cit., pp. 62-63; Opatowsky, op. cit., pp. 46-47; Times-Picayune, March 26, 1929; and an interview with James Lowery, secretary to the late A. O. Campbell of Mid-Continent Oil and Gas and a licensed lobbyist, who was present at the time.

"mechanical difficulties."²⁵ The House, including some members who might normally have sided with Long but who believed he had tampered with the machine, was clearly impeachment minded.

The state's press reacted in predictable fashion. In its edition of March 27, the conservative Times-Picayune placed its stamp of approval on the movement to remove the Kingfish from office: "The reason for this is that he is temperamentally and otherwise unfit to hold office. His tactics and methods reveal him to be a cruel political tyrant."²⁶

Of the two constitutional methods provided for the removal of a governor, recall and impeachment, the anti-Long forces, for obvious reasons, selected the latter. The House thus assumed the role as a jury of indictment, to weigh the evidence presented. By the time the impeachment list reached the desks of the legislators, it included every charge under which a Louisiana governor could be impeached, with one exception: "habitual drunkenness."

²⁵ Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 27-28.

²⁶ Editorial in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, March 27, 1929.

The nineteen articles charged the Kingfish with the following offenses: use of his appointive power to influence the judiciary, and boasting of that use of power; misuse, misapplication, and misappropriation of state funds; bribery and attempted bribery of state legislators; securing of undated resignations from appointees of the Orleans Parish Levee Board; contracting illegal loans for the state; removal of public school officials for political purposes; unlawful use of the militia to subordinate the civil authority, with reference to the early 1929 raids on New Orleans gambling; attempting to force parish officials to follow his dictation in political litigation as the price of permitting passage of legislation affecting such parishes; habitually carrying concealed weapons; violent abuse of officials and citizens visiting him on official business; gross misconduct in public places; publicly flouting the state and federal constitutions, and usurping the power of the Legislature; purchasing a \$20,000 ice-machine for Angola Penitentiary without advertizing for bids; intimidating the press in the Manship affair; demolishing the Executive Mansion without express legislative authority and spending \$150,000 for a new Mansion; disposing of and destroying furniture in the Executive Mansion without authorization or accounting; unlawfully

paroling a convict from the state penitentiary; repeatedly appearing within the bar of the House of Representatives in violation of the state Constitution; and suborning murder in attempting to hire "Battling" Bozeman to assassinate Jared Y. Sanders, Jr.²⁷

Anti-Long forces gathered in New Orleans to set in motion a Constitutional League, headed by former Governor Parker, to "uphold the Constitution of Louisiana." Ewing's Daily State referred to the meeting of about three hundred persons in the St. Charles Hotel as

the most representative gathering of citizens that has been held in Louisiana within a decade. . . . a considerable number of business men in the meeting announced subscriptions of \$1,000 each. . . . [when] the subscriptions were closed, the total was estimated at \$100,000. This was done in 15 minutes.²⁸

The duration of the special session became an issue on April 5, 1929. The eighteen day session originally called would end at midnight of the following day. An Attorney-General ruling had established the right of the Legislature, as an impeachment court, but not as a law-making body, to remain in session.²⁹ Thus the supporters

²⁷Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 51-52.

²⁸ News item in the Baton Rouge Daily States, June 11, 1929.

²⁹Opinions of the Attorney-General of Louisiana, May 1, 1928, to April 30, 1930, pp. 188-93.

of the administration raised the objection that the state Legislature was not a court of impeachment until a charge had been adopted and transmitted to the Senate so that they could legally remain in session. The House processed the charges so slowly, however, that only the Manship press intimidation item had been adopted favorably by April 6, 1929.³⁰

The timing of these actions in the House was seized upon by Long and his nine attorneys as the basis for his legal defense in the Senate. The Kingfish's "Exception and Demurrer No. 1" reasoned that House action after the date of adjournment specified in his call was illegal. That is, he recognized the Manship charge as the only legal item of impeachment. On May 15, the Senate rejected Long's argument by vote: 19 yea, 20 nea. Long's "Exception and Demurrer No. 2" argued that in the Manship affair he had acted in a personal rather than an official capacity. The Senate, on May 16, sustained this point on a narrow margin.³¹

The latter vote was seized upon by the associates of the Kingfish in the Senate to bring his trial of impeachment

³⁰ Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929,
pp. 233.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 245-65.

to an immediate close. The Manship charge, the only one voted on before the session legally ended, was not an impeachable offense. Testimony further revealed that the threat came to Manship through a reporter under circumstances which weakened its credibility.³² Therefore, fifteen of the thirty-nine Senators brought forth the celebrated Round Robin.³³ The document, filed by Senator Philip H. Gilbert, stated:

On motion of the undersigned Senators of the state of Louisiana, and on suggestion to this Honorable Senate, sitting as a court of impeachment, that . . . all charges of impeachment preferred against the said Huey P. Long, Governor, after April 6, 1929, were unconstitutional, illegal, null, and void . . . the undersigned, constituting more than one-third of the membership of this Senate, sitting as a court of impeachment, do now officially announce that by reason of the unconstitutionality and invalidity of all impeachment charges . . . will not vote against Huey P. Long . . . [and] we move that the Senate . . . adjourn sine die.³⁴

Since the conviction required an absolute two-thirds majority vote in the Senate, the anti-Longs had no choice but to accept the Round Robineers' motion for adjournment sine die. The Kingfish thus emerged the victor in the

³² Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, pp. 129-34.

³³ The fifteen names were signed in a circular manner so that the order of signing could not be determined.

³⁴ Louisiana Senate Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929, p. 265.

supreme battle of his career.³⁵

Foes of the Kingfish have never ceased to belabor the climax of the impeachment trial as a deliberate mockery of justice. That view, however, overlooks the fact that "justice" was never present, hence could not be mocked.³⁶ The impeachment was politically inspired from beginning to and and, therefore, the Round Robin was a piece with the rest of the play.

The unbelievable sloppiness with which the forces opposed to Long pressed their case against the Governor was a reflection of the political nature of the impeachment. The charges were selected indiscriminately, the hearings were forums of personal revenge, and the entire effort was diffused.

The failure of the impeachment counterattack was most costly to the conservative cause. The Kingfish spoke grimly of the future, "I used to try to get things done by saying 'please.' That didn't work and now I am a dynamiter.

³⁵ Sindler, op. cit., p. 65.

³⁶ Ibid.

I dynamite 'em out of my path."³⁷ And when the newspapers howled at the Robineers, Long laughed and agreed with the press that "theirs is the earth and the fullness thereof."³⁸ Thus, the sterile trial of impeachment served to intensify his class program.

³⁷ Davis, op. cit., p. 119.

³⁸ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 18, 1929.

HUEY LONG, GOVERNOR-SENATOR, 1930-1933

Long's efforts to complete his program traveled on a rough road. Occasionally, Long advanced a mile, then fell back two miles. At times he was forced into wide detours. The Kingfish had promised to be a Dynamiter. In the end he became one. For at least another year, however, he found it expedient to say an occasional "please."

There is a popular belief that the end of the hearing for impeachment marked the end of all organized political resistance to the Long program. This is far from accurate. The Kingfish remained in a precarious position for months, but his opponents never again seriously threatened his political existence.

Much of the Kingfish's uncertainty in official affairs stemmed from the disposition of the charges against him. The charges were not dropped when the Legislature adjourned. Instead, they were merely shelved. Conceivably, although unlikely, the charges could have been revived at the 1930 regular legislative session. In any event, the Kingfish was uneasy about their presence until much later, when the charges against him were officially removed.

News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune.

October 7, 1929.

News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune.

October 28, 1929.

The first evidence of the continued antipathy toward the Kingfish came, as might be expected, from New Orleans. On September 6, 1929, the Constitutional League issue a news statement listing the names, positions, relationships, and salaries of twenty-four persons who were supposed to be relatives of the Governor. According to the League, the relatives of the Governor were drawing \$75,849.40 per year in state salaries.¹

Long scoffed at the charges, saying that he had never heard of a "ninth cousin" or a "cousin of an in-law." He further stated that he was expecting "the League of Nations to soon investigate the rooster at the state penitentiary to see if the state is not feeding some of my relatives without charge."²

As usual, however, the Kingfish did not stop at ridicule. General Campbell Hughes had been named the President of Louisiana State University, but he had not formally taken office. General Hughes' brother, however, had been prominent in the formation of the Constitutional League. Hence, it was wrong to employ allies, reasoned the Kingfish, it was equally wrong to employ enemies. The Governor

¹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, September 7, 1929.

² News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, September 28, 1929.

announced a new president to replace Hodges.³

On July 18, 1929, in an open-letter to the Governor, a committee of bankers and industrialists petitioned Long to end his "political testing." The letter continued that if the Governor would not undertake to establish any form of an occupational license tax, a \$20,000,000 chemical plant would locate in the state. The letter was signed by the chairman of the committee, Harvey C. Couch, President of the Louisiana Light and Power Company and the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad. The other signatures were penned by seven presidents of various banks and commercial organizations. The Governor promised not to enact any license tax during his term in office in exchange for business' support of an alternative plan of taxation.⁴

The New Orleans Ring was romanced ny the Governor's hands-off policy in the January, 1930, mayoralty contest

³ Ibid.

⁴ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 19, 1929; and Allan P. Sindler, Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 68.

between Ring captain T. Semmes Walmsley and anti-Ring Francis Williams. Walmsley was elected by less than ten thousand votes. The Governor, it was presumed, could have swung five thousand city votes one way or the other had he actively intervened in the election.

To gain further favor in the Crescent City the Governor made vague hints that additional state revenue could usefully be applied to the \$40,000,000 debt of the New Orleans Dock Board, a state agency.

To bolster his position in the Legislature, on the first day of the 1930 regular session, the Governor made no mention of the controversial tick-eradication problem and, by strategic maneuvering, placed the problem of securing additional state revenues in the laps of the Solons. For President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Kingfish backed the candidacy of a Senator who had voted in favor of his impeachment in one of the two votes and who had not been one of the Robineers.⁵

The Kingfish's concessions reaped a meager reward. Longites, reduced from its majority proportions in 1929, faced anti-Long forces who remained sufficiently numerous and cohesive to produce a stalemated session. The factional

⁵ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 12, 1930; and Louisiana Senate Journal, 1930 (Baton Rouge:1930), pp. 4-5.

alignment of the lawmakers was made evident at the beginning of the 1930 regular session of the Legislature.⁶ Forty-four of the one-hundred state Representatives supported a motion to reorganize the House which has as its ultimate purpose the ouster of John B. Fournet from the speakership.⁷ Alvin O. King, of Lake Charles, replaced Robineer Philip H. Gilbert as President Pro Tempore of the Senate.⁸

A few days before the opening of the May 11, 1930, regular session, the Governor had created a tempest when he had hinted that he might run for the United States Senate.⁹ According to the Governor:

I am practically sure I'm going to run but I won't if I have to let that good friend of mine, the Lieutenant-Governor, get the office. I love him too much to impose the duties of Governor on him.¹⁰

The influential Times-Picayune, which continued to

⁶News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 12, 1930.

⁷Louisiana House Journal, 1930 (Baton Rouge: 1930), pp. 14-15.

⁸Louisiana Senate Journal, 1930. pp. 4-5.

⁹By the Constitution of 1921, the Governor could not succeed himself. Long had almost two years remaining in his term. The law has since been amended.

¹⁰News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 5, 1930.

serve as a vocal agent for the renewal of the impeachment proceedings, leveled the charge that Long was "bluffing" about running for the Senate and that the hint was made as a strategic move to win legislative support.¹¹ Due to Long's unstable position in the Legislature, however, the Governor's announcement was received with little notice by the state's lawmakers.

The technique of mass appeal via circulars, initially used by the Kingfish when campaigning for his first office, had also been successfully employed to gain public support during his impeachment fight. Thus, with decisive political battles plainly in sight and with every major newspaper in the state against him, the Kingfish established his own newspaper. On Thursday, March 27, 1930, the first issue of The Louisiana Progress appeared.

To get The Louisiana Progress rolling, the Governor hired Trist Wood, a famous Louisiana political-cartoonist, and set up the newspaper plant just across the state line in Mississippi. The Progress served a double purpose. It would saturate the public with the Kingfish's accounts of programs in public works and construction; it would also

¹¹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 5, 1930.

magnify his opponents' shortcomings, drench them with a steady stream of adverse personal publicity and, where possible, ridicule their achievements.¹² The Progress always featured cartoons by Trist Wood pictorializing the opponents of the Kingfish as snakes and buzzards. "Trist," as he signed himself, portrayed the major New Orleans newspapers as grotesque-looking characters who told lies and nothing but lies. The Constitutional League was a favorite of Trist's pen. The League was characterized as a balky little mule carrying a group of broken-down politicians.

From the standpoint of circulation and financial stability, the Progress was an immediate success. As Long recorded, "Our friends throughout the state voluntarily solicited subscriptions¹³ for the Progress. We began to make life merry for our enemies with cartoon, statistics, and comparisons."¹⁴ Getting the paper to its readers was never a problem, according to one of Long's most critical

¹² Long, op. cit., pp. 188-93; Martin, op. cit., pp. 74-75; and Sindler, op. cit., 70-71.

¹³ The Progress sold for five cents per issue or for two dollars for a one-year subscription.

¹⁴ Long, op. cit., pp. 188-89.

biographers,

Squads of them [state policemen], assisted by the ubiquitous highway crews, gave the paper the most unique circulation organization.¹⁵

The Louisiana Progress began as a weekly, but the frequency of the paper's appearance was almost a barometer of the Kingfish's political fortune. An increase in his opponents' activities spelled an increase in publication.

The most controversial item of the regular session was the Governor's "good roads measure," a \$60,000,000 highway bond issue, which by necessity was submitted in the form of a constitutional amendment. The measure was never able to secure the absolute two-thirds majority vote in each chamber which was required for its passage. The Governor was able to holdback a host of opposition measures through outright legislative rejection, insertion of weakening amendments, or gubernatorial vetoes. The Governor vetoed four major bills: \$6,400 for "additional expenses for the Lieutenant-Governor while acting Governor;" a similar amount for the Attorney-General, who was "acting counsel" for the Constitutional League;¹⁶ a \$100,000 appropriation to pay

¹⁵ Martin, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁶ Long, op. cit., 210.

the cost of the impeachment proceedings; and the popular tick-eradication bill.¹⁷

On the last day allotted for bills to be entered on the legislative calendar, the administration introduced a measure calling for a constitutional convention.¹⁸ The bill, however, was at the bottom of a congested calendar and was further hampered by a delaying tactic employed by the enemies of the administration. Representative Allen Ellender moved that the procedural rules be changed so that the convention bill could be considered out of its regular order.¹⁹ A compromise, however, left the measure for a convention in its normal position with a pledge from the opposition that it would stop its delaying action.²⁰ The measure calling for a convention passed the House by a narrow margin: six votes.²¹

¹⁷ Typical of his political adroitness was his approval of the legislatively-sponsored measure providing for a tick-eradication program, followed by his veto of a companion appropriation bill. Long felt that while the state remained "open range," such a law was unworkable.

¹⁸ Louisiana House Journal, 1930, p. 397; and the Louisiana Senate Journal, 1930, pp. 324-25.

¹⁹ Allen J. Ellender, at the time of this writing, is the senior United States Senator from Louisiana. The junior Senator is Russell B. Long.

²⁰ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 20, 1930.

²¹ Louisiana House Journal, 1930, pp. 646-47.

The individuals opposed to the convention continued their efforts to kill the bill. The Times-Picayune sent a wire to Lieutenant-Governor Cyr urging him to aid in the bill's defeat.²² Editorially, that newspaper also leveled an attack on the measure:

While pretending to limit constitutional change to three subjects, the bill in fact permits the complete rewriting of the Constitution, it is revolution entire. It does this by providing for submission of the convention's work to the approval of the voters. Thus the constitutional convention demanded by the Governor is a wide open convention.²³

Most sources agree with Long's own version of what transpired in the Senate:

When our bill for Constitutional Convention reached the Senate, a well-designed filibuster was organized to be carried out largely through the conduct of the Lieutenant-Governor. At the beginning of every morning session, some opposition Senator rose to a point of personal privilege and spoke throughout the day.²⁴

No member of the Senate, not a party to the plot, could secure recognition from the presiding officer, the Lieutenant-Governor. The filibuster continued for days, until Long concluded that his position would best be served

²² News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 4 and 5, 1930.

²³ Editorial in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, June 21, 1930.

²⁴ Long, op. cit., 206-07.

by having the session end in filibuster.²⁵

When the 1930 regular legislative session ended, it was evident that Louisiana finances "had come to a standstill." The appropriations for all state agencies had been reduced and no new revenue-producing measures had been enacted to relieve the situation in the future. However, by holding the Governor to a stalemate in the Legislature, the anti-administration forces inadvertently encouraged him to carry his case directly to the people.²⁶

On July 17, 1930, a week after the Legislature adjourned, the Governor made an official announcement, via The Louisiana Progress, that he would oppose the incumbent, United States Senator Joseph E. Ransdell,²⁷ a veteran of thirty-two years of Congressional office. The sole issue of the campaign, as he saw it was the program which had been killed by the Legislature. The Kingfish further stated that if a "majority of people, voting in this Senatorial contest, do not cast their vote in my favor then I am willing to admit that the people do not want the program which I have en-

²⁵ Long, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 211.

²⁷ The Governor scathingly referred to the goateed Senator Ransdell as "old Feather Duster."

dorsed." He also repeated an earlier announcement that due to the riff with the Lieutenant-Governor, he would not leave the state until his gubernatorial term expired.²⁸ There were hurried protests that Louisiana Senatorial representation would suffer, but Long brushed the objections aside by saying that "with Ransdell as Senator, the seat was vacant anyway."²⁹

As Long recorded in his autobiography, Every Man a King, "it was the battle of Louisiana's history. For once the public press was united--all against me."³⁰

The Kingfish introduced novel campaign methods into the Senatorial race. He hired two "gaudy, expensive sound trucks"³¹ to spread the Long message across the state. The trucks became, in Long's own words, "the first portable appliance . . . ever used in a political campaign."³² He

²⁸

News item in The Louisiana Progress, July 17, 1930.

²⁹

Long, op. cit., p. 213.

³⁰

Ibid.

³¹

Reinhard H. Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), p. 251.

³²

Long, op. cit., p. 220.

began a baby-sitter service to be used at outdoor rallies. The Kingfish also made frequent use of the tool that was soon to become his major device for spreading his plans to Share Our Wealth: radio. His broadcasts always began the same way:

This is Huey P. Long talking, but I'm not going to say anything important for the next few minutes so you can go to the telephone and call up four or five of your friends and tell them to tune in too.

Long waited almost until August to shift his campaign into high gear. Senator Ransdell had proceeded him, moving from one parish seat to another, conducting his campaign in the "courtly, restrained manner of traditional southern politicians."³³ Ransdell was virtually helpless against the Governor's parish-saturation technique. The voters were seeking a newer and fresher figure for public life. To many of them the goateed, seventy-two year old Senator, stilted and formal, had become a shopworn political type.³⁴

At St. Martinsville, St. Martin Parish, the Governor, in his first major speech, repeated his claim that the "main issue" of the Senatorial race was the endorsement of his general works and state highway construction programs. He

³³Martin, op. cit., p. 77.

³⁴Luthin, op. cit., p. 252.

recounted his free textbook battle and denounced goateed "old trashy mouth" Ransdell for his aid to the "predatory interests and Wall Street in sending our young men in[to] Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Honduras." Long inadvertently introduced the race issue with a statement of opposition to the appointment of John J. Parker, of North Carolina, to the United States Supreme Court.³⁵ The speech concluded with a pledge to support the farm relief program that the seventy-two year old Senator opposed, independence for the Philippines, the abandonment of the differential tariff on Cuban sugar, and "freedom from foreign entanglements."³⁶

In mid-July two other Louisiana notables, Frank L. Looney, a Shreveport attorney, and August Williams, a former Longite, entered the Senatorial race. Williams, who did not believe "any thing should be allowed to stand in the

³⁵ Senator Ransdell had backed the appointment of Judge John J. Parker to the United States Supreme Court. To organized labor, Parker represented the "yellow dog" contract. Accordingly, Ransdell was rejected by the Louisiana Federation of Labor. In defense, Ransdell held that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had opposed Parker, and his pro-Parker stand had been conditioned by racial, not anti-labor considerations. Therefore, continued Ransdell, Long's attack on his support of Parker indicated that Long favored racial equality.

³⁶ News item in the Louisiana Progress, August 7, 1930.

way of accomplishing the defeat of Long,"³⁷ withdrew early. On August 9, 1930, Looney withdrew from the contest to "back Ransdell."³⁸ With the campaign narrowed to only two, State Senator William C. Boone framed the race between Long and Ransdell as a choice between "honest or dishonest government in Louisiana."³⁹

The opposition chose Huey P. Long himself as the campaign issue. Colonel Sullivan, of the "new" Ring, apologized for having previously backed Long and predicted that if Long was elected, he would not be seated. The Colonel, who was soon joined by J. Y. Sanders, Sr., of the Ring, and August Williams,⁴⁰ stated that:

Jesse James was a gentleman compared with Long, because Jesse James at least wore a mask. Long has the face of a clown, the heart of a petty larceny burglar and the disposition of a tyrant.⁴¹

At a New Orleans rally for Ransdell, Joseph A.

³⁷ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, July 29, 1930.

³⁸ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 10, 1930.

³⁹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 11, 1930.

⁴⁰ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 24-26, 1930.

⁴¹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 23, 1930.

Finnerman denounced Long as a "false friend of labor,"⁴² although a few days earlier William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, had personally endorsed Long in a letter to The Louisiana Progress.⁴³

The press of the state was led by the Times-Picayune in its assault on Long. Banner-line stories accused the Governor of forcing all state employees to make a "voluntary contribution" of one-tenth of one month's salary to fill his campaign chests,⁴⁴ and using prison labor "to the exclusion of free labor in the painting of auto tire covers" publicizing his candidacy.⁴⁵ Even the venerable New York Times hoped not to see Long "transfer his political methods and his personality to the floor of the already suffering Senate."⁴⁶

The claim by Walter B. Hamlin, a New Orleans attorney, is typical of the position maintained by the anti-Long camp: "The real issue is Huey P. Long, his political debauchery

⁴²
August 20, 1930. News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune,

⁴³
News item in The Louisiana Progress, July 31, 1930.

⁴⁴
August 8, 1930. News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune,

⁴⁵
August 29, 1930. News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune,

⁴⁶
News item in the New York Times, August 31, 1930.

and corruptive influence in Louisiana politics."⁴⁷

In the final days of the campaign, Long fired a final shot at "concentrated wealth." The Wall Street capitalists, said Long,

must be made to realize that they cannot go on piling up millions and millions of dollars. They may call it [Long's criticism] socialism, but let them disown me. Every law that isn't for capitalist is always called socialistic.⁴⁸

Lieutenant-Governor Paul Cyr, fiercely anti-Long, provided the backdrop for election week. Cyr announced that the Constitution of 1921 prohibited a state official from holding a federal office:

If Long should be elected Senator, he will either have to resign his seat in the Senate, or will cease to be governor of Louisiana.⁴⁹

Lieutenant-Governor Cyr, continuing his broadside, accused Long of attempting to get out of the state before the crash that

is bound to come as a result of the financial situation to which his extravagant and corrupt administration has brought the schools and institutions of the state.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 31, 1930.

⁴⁸ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 30, 1930.

⁴⁹ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 27, 1930.

⁵⁰ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, August 28, 1930.

In the September primary, Long steamrolled Ransdell in every section of the state. Even in St. Bernard Parish, the scene of the raids on gambling by militia men, Long scored an astonishing victory--Long: 3,970, Ransdell: 9. The vote would suggest a solid endorsement of the Long program by the people of Louisiana, as shown in the following results:⁵¹

	Orleans	Other	State	% State
Long	38,682	110,958	149,640	57.3
Ransdell	43,373	68,078	114,511	42.7
Total	82,055	179,036	261,091	

A comparison of the above table with the table on page 43 shows that the Governor increased his proportion of the total state vote from 43.9 per cent in 1928 to 57.3 per cent in 1930. It should be noted, however, that the total vote cast in 1930 declined 27,824 from that of 1928. Most of the decreased turnout came from parishes other than Orleans. Long was backed by approximately the same number of voters outside Orleans Parish in 1928 (109,023) and in 1930 (110,958). At the same time, he more than doubled his number of allies in Orleans Parish in 1930 (47 per cent) compared with that of 1928 (23 per cent).

⁵¹ Computed from Compilation of Primary Election Returns of the Democratic Party, State of Louisiana, held September 9, 1930.

Comparison of Figure 2, page 16, Figure 3, page 44, and Figure 4, page 108 leads to the conclusion that elements of continuity were superimposed on those of change. In 1930 as in 1928, Long possessed relatively greater strength in the old Populist strongholds, and relative weakness in the Delta, the Sugar Bowl, and the urban areas.

Peace doves, an almost extinct species, appeared in Louisiana shortly after the Senatorial primary. Long's victory at the polls broke the factional stalemate in the state. It was commonly held that all measures should be passed backing his "good roads" project. Although there were some die-hards, such as Representative Gilbert Dupre, of Opelousas, who had earlier accused the Governor of "spending state money in a whore house,"⁵² and who also maintained:

The Legislature may ratify what they [Longites] propose, the people confirm it, but I am going to be dismissed from the bargain. I am going to vote No, even if I am the only member of the House to do this.⁵³

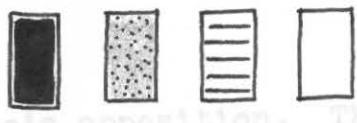
The vogue, however, was away from Representative

⁵²
Louisiana House Journal, Fifth Extra Session, 1929.
(Baton Rouge: 1929), p. 97.

⁵³
News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune,
September 17, 1930.

LOUISIANA 1930

% RANGE



99.8 - 72.1
 72.0 - 66.7
 66.5 - 55.3
 55.0 - 17.2

Statewide % : 57.3

(Computed from

Compilation of Primary
Election Returns at

the Democratic
Party, State of
Louisiana)

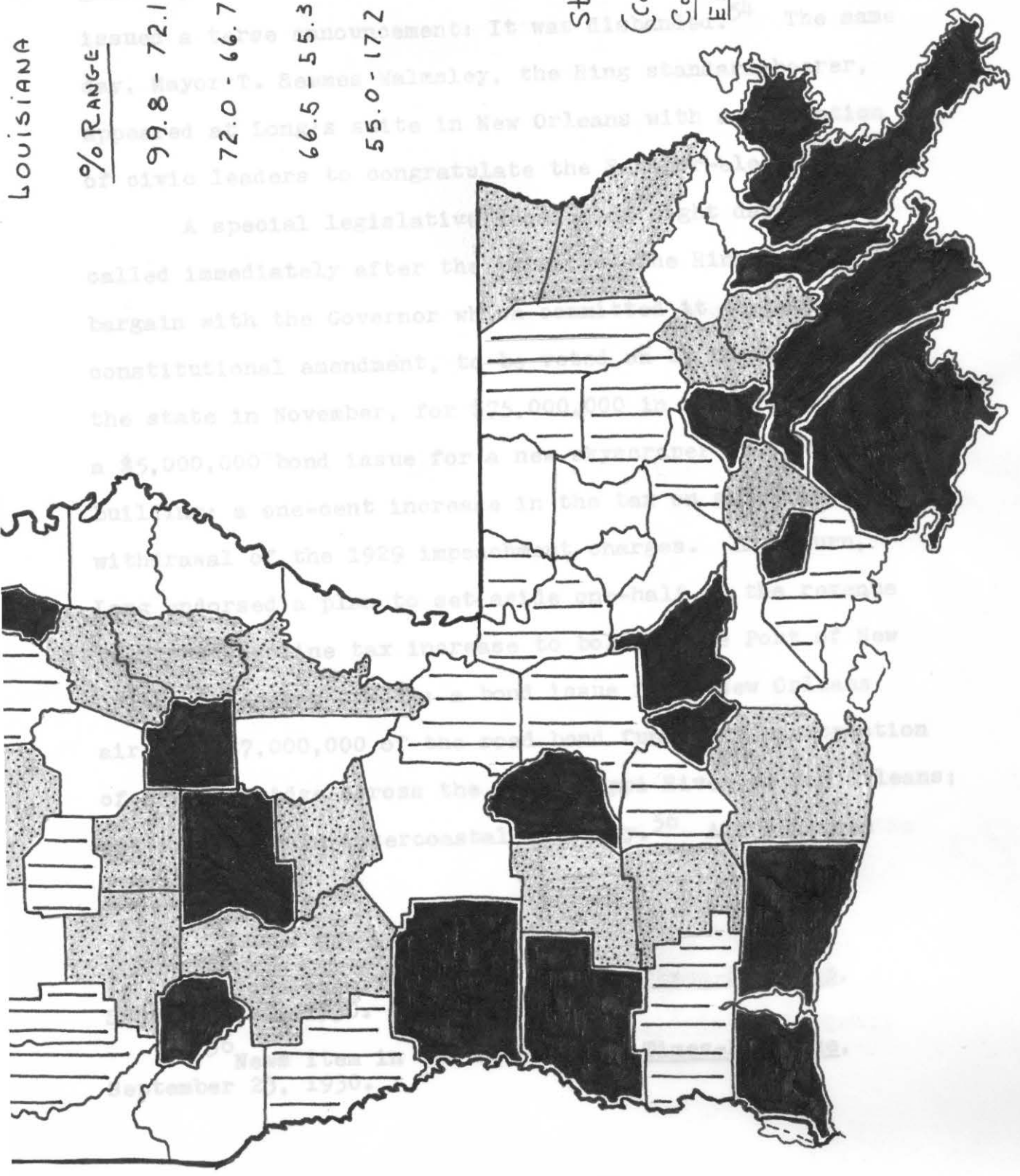


Figure 4.

Dupre's opposition. The day following the primary, the gnat-fly of the administration, the Constitutional League, issued a terse announcement: It was disbanded.⁵⁴ The same day, Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley, the Ring standard-bearer, appeared at Long's suite in New Orleans with a delegation of civic leaders to congratulate the Senator-elect.⁵⁵

A special legislative session of eight days was called immediately after the primary. The Ring struck a bargain with the Governor which committed it to back a constitutional amendment, to be voted on by the people of the state in November, for \$75,000,000 in new highway bonds; a \$5,000,000 bond issue for a new skyscraper state capitol building; a one-cent increase in the tax on gasoline; and withdrawal of the 1929 impeachment charges. In return, Long endorsed a plan to set aside one-half of the revenue from the gasoline tax increase to bolster the Port of New Orleans' sagging credit; a bond issue for a New Orleans airport; \$7,000,000 of the road bond funds for construction of a free bridge across the Mississippi River at New Orleans; and funds for an intercoastal waterway.⁵⁶ All measures

⁵⁴ Long, op. cit., p. 235.

⁵⁵ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, September 22, 1930.

⁵⁶ News item in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, September 23, 1930.

were passed.⁵⁷

The ease in which Long's program was enacted, however, should not overshadow the fact that Representative Dupre was far from being the only Solon to oppose the Kingfish. In spite of the margin of victory in the Senatorial primary and the entente between the Governor and the Ring, twenty-one of the one-hundred members of the House opposed the motion by Representative Allen J. Ellender to withdraw the charges of impeachment against the Governor. Further, the Times-Picayune, although less hostile, editorially warned that due to the amount of control given Long, he would personally be responsible for the political future of the state.⁵⁸

By 1931 the dominance of the Long forces in the state was evident. The barometer of Long's success, The Louisiana Progress, a weekly at the beginning, after the acceptance of the constitutional amendments in November, 1930, converted to a monthly publication.

After the Senatorial primary, Long did not leave the state for fear that Cyr would seize power. Cyr, aided by various anti-Longites, had never ceased to insist upon the

⁵⁷ Acts, State of Louisiana, Regular Session, 1932, Extra Sessions, 1930 and 1932 (Baton Rouge: 1932), pp. 5-33, 39-41, 45-47, 57-58.

⁵⁸ Editorial in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 5, 1930.

unconstitutionality of Long's dual role as Governor and United States Senator-elect. On October 13, 1931, Paul Cyr announced that since Long "could not possibly be governor" that he, Paul Cyr had been sworn in as the Governor of the state by a notary public in Shreveport. He further stated that the temporary "capitol" was now the Heidelberg Hotel.⁵⁹ Cyr later moved the "capitol" to his home in Jeaneratte. He became a laughing stock. Throughout Louisiana wags sought out notaries public so that they also could be sworn in as Governor of Louisiana.⁶⁰

Long, however, upstaged even Cyr's performance. He announced that if Cyr had taken the oath as Governor he was, therefore, no longer Lieutenant-Governor. Long swore in the President pro tempore of the Senate, Alvin O. King, as Lieutenant-Governor, and had the state payroll so adjusted.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Long, op. cit., pp. 287-88; Martin, op. cit., pp. 86-88; Optowsky, op. cit., pp. 57-58; and the New Orleans Times-Picayune, October 13-27, 1931.

⁶⁰ Although Long went along with the various gags and pranks during the "Governors' Battle," the Secretary of State, Alice Lee Grosjean, did not accept any of the joke credentials.

⁶¹ The same month that Long left Louisiana to claim his Senate seat, the Louisiana Supreme Court, in a 4-3 decision, maintained that it lacked jurisdiction in the Cyr case and the United States Senate was the proper body to determine the date on which Long qualified as a Senator.

To keep in operation the program started during his administration, Long announced his "Complete the Work" ticket: for Governor, state Highway Commissioner O. K. Allen, of Winn Parish, a boyhood friend; for Lieutenant-Governor, Speaker of the House Fournet of Bloody Monday fame during the 1929 impeachment battle.⁶²

A south Louisiana Catholic, Dudley J. LeBlanc, headed the ticket which provided the major anti-Long force in the 1932 campaign, although Earl Long, Huey's younger brother, ran for Lieutenant-Governor on the ticket of George S. Guion.⁶³

The outcome of the January 9, 1932, primary was a victory for Longism. Allen's entire nine-man ticket won office with him.

Long remained in the state only long enough to observe the victory of O. K. Allen as Governor-elect. On January 25, 1932, with Alvin King as Governor, United States Senator Huey P. Long left Louisiana by train for Washington, D. C.

⁶²News item in the Louisiana Progress, November 10, 1931.

⁶³Two minor gubernatorial candidates, William Boone, and William Clark, received a combined total vote of 1,346.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Before Huey Long entered Louisiana politics, so the folklore goes, the voters had no choice. As Long liked to say, Louisiana had been suffering from the Tweedledum and Tweedledee administrations: "One of them skinned you from the ankles up, the other from the neck down."¹ Since Huey Long, the people of the state have had the choice between a venal administration with a dynamic platform, or an honest corporation-puppet administration. Like most popular myths, these ideas are tempered by exaggeration; yet as popular myths often do, they contain an element of truth.²

I. SUMMARY

In the years following Reconstruction, the positions of power in Louisiana were assumed by a hierarchy representing the upper-income groups: the old plantation class and the new and rising business interests. By the turn of

¹ Harnett T. Kane, Louisiana Hayride: The American Rehearsal for Dictatorship, 1928-1940 (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1940), p. 62.

² V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 164.

the century, all business factions were dwarfed by Standard Oil Company.

The Ring, New Orleans' Democratic machine, and the Standard Oil Company usually emerged as the victors in the running battle between the Crescent City and the rural parishes. Influenced by the oil interest, the Ring moved the state into a civic vacuum with its "safe" policies. The dominant influence of the Ring in state politics continued the tradition of upper-class rule.³

Huey Pierce Long, Jr., was born in Winn Parish in 1893, the seventh of nine children. Winn Parish, with its thin red soil and cutover loblolly pine patches, was poor in comparison with the more favored sugar and cotton parishes. However, the Longs were not "white trash," they were middle-class farmers, with a respect for education and a strong desire to acquire it. After incomplete legal training at Oklahoma State University and Tulane Law School, Long passed a special bar examination and, at twenty-one, was licensed to practice law. Following an unprofitable law practice in Winnfield, specializing in industrial compensa-

³ Readers who regard classes as fictions and disagree with this writer's interpretation of them may nevertheless discover some interesting interpretations of a general nature in this chapter. While local Louisiana history has been examined in terms of classes, the author has avoided treating them from a purely Marxian point of view since there was not sufficient evidence to justify it.

tion, Long sought the one state office open to him: Third District Railroad Commissioner. In the runoff, Long won by a narrow margin.

Having achieved statewide fame through his battles with the Standard Oil Company and a series of strategic rate cases, Long entered the 1924 gubernatorial primary. However, the state was divided by a religious conflict which was instrumental in bringing about Long's defeat.

In 1928, when Long again filed for Louisiana's highest elective office, neither of his opponents, singly, represented a threat to his chances of victory. Under the campaign banner Every Man a King, Long presented a platform advocating free textbooks, free bridges, a vast highway construction program, natural gas for the larger cities, and the enactment of an occupational license tax on the Standard Oil Company.

Although Long received only 43.9 per cent of the total vote cast, his opponents withdrew from the race, eliminating the need for a runoff, and Long was nominated as the Democratic candidate for Governor of Louisiana.

It took Long several years to achieve his goals due to the implacable opposition of the upper-classes. Eight months after his inauguration as governor and the announcement of his principle legislative demands, an attempt was made to impeach him. Long narrowly defeated the move by

securing a document, signed by a sufficient number of Senators to block a vote for conviction, declaring the proceedings unconstitutional.

The termination of the impeachment hearings did not mark the end of organized political resistance to the Long program. The charges against the Governor were merely shelved and, conceivably, could have been renewed. The uncertain position of the Governor resulted in a legislative stalemate in 1930.

With two years remaining in his administration, Long announced his Senatorial candidacy, making the endorsement of his gubernatorial program the issue of the campaign, and pledging not to leave the state, if elected, until his term as governor had expired.

Long's triumph in the Senatorial primary broke the factional deadlock in the state Legislature. Following the Senatorial primary, the Legislature, in special session, enacted a major portion of the Long program, although there still existed considerable political resistance.

A few months before departing for Washington to claim his Senatorial seat, Governor Long announced a Complete the Work slate, listing candidates he endorsed for the nine major offices of the state. The entire ticket was approved by the voters of Louisiana in the 1932 Democratic primary.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The popular view of Huey P. Long, such as that presented by R. H. Luthin in American Demagogues: Twentieth Century, dismisses him as little else but a highly successful member of the family of southern poor-white leaders commonly termed demagogues. The term "demagogue" usually refers to a professional "man of the people," one who proposes quack remedies insincerely for political or personal gains. To uncover a demagogue, the observer is to pay particular attention to irrational appeals, attempts to sway emotions, and attention-getting tomfoolery.⁴ However, such criteria are inadequate and misleading and have made of the term a subjective epithet to be used with politicians one dislikes. Whether one is to be classified a demagogue or a statesman seems quite often to depend upon the respectability of one's followers and upon the agencies of propaganda which oppose one. Thus, the validity of many charges of personal corruption leveled against Huey Long, while highly relevant to an interpretation of his record, for obvious reasons is

⁴ Reinhard H. Luthin, American Demagogues: Twentieth Century (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), pp. 302-19.

impossible to determine on the single basis of public information.

As W. J. Cash, in The Mind of the South, was probably the first to note, Huey Long was the first southern leader to overwhelm the established machine [the Ring] and bring it to terms.⁵ In the words of V. O. Key, Jr.:

He did not permit himself, in the oft-repeated pattern, to be hamstrung by a legislature dominated by old hands experienced in legislation and frequently under corporation retainer. He elected his legislature and erected a structure of political power. . . .⁶

However, Carlton Beals, in The Story of Huey P. Long, wrote:

his methods were inevitable, and in themselves not reprehensible. No intelligent critic should attack Huey Long too much for the manner in which he smashed the die-hard clique.⁷

And even Francis Butler Simkins, who framed Long as another Hitler or Mussolini,⁸ stated that:

perhaps the greatest tragedy of the twentieth century was not that such men [as Long] were so popular, but that the administration they aroused was not altogether

⁵ W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), pp. 284-85.

⁶ V. O. Key, Jr., op. cit., p. 157.

⁷ Carlton Beals, The Story of Huey P. Long (Philadelphia: H. B. Lippencott Company, 1935), p. 20.

⁸ Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 546.

understood.⁹

If Huey Long had merely created an efficient personal machine, his accomplishment, while noteworthy, would not have afforded him the attention he attracted in his own life or entitled him to the unique place he has in the annals of American politics. By keeping faith with his voters while Governor, Long provoked a rural lower-class revolution which exceeded that of Populism in durability and intensity. It aroused the political have-nots and showed them the total victory that was theirs for the balloting. By overcoming the appeals of localism and personality common to the one-party state, the revolution moved the state into close approximation to a two-party system with the major parties Long and anti-Long.

⁹Francis Butler Simkins, The South: Old and New (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 439.

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