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Father Charles E. Coughlin and the Formation of the Union Party 1936

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FATHER CHARLES E. COUGHLIN AND THE FORMATION OF THE UNION PARTY 1936

by

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FOR

G.W.M. and J.W.R.

"As History is the sum of past action,

the Historian is the sum of past mentors."

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PREFACE

On October 17, 1926, a young Irish-Catholic priest stood before the altar of his church in Royal Oak, Michigan and delivered a radio sermon. Within a decade, his voice, transmitted by thousands of radios, would be familiar to millions of Americans. Father Charles E. Coughlin had begun a stormy career that would earn him the title "radio priest" and make him one of the most controversial figures to appear on the American political scene in the depression-ridden 1930's.

The effects of the Great Depression of 1929 on American society affected the priest deeply. The "Hoovervilles," breadlines and apple sellers so evident in Detroit caused him to include political and economic material in his previously all-religious broadcasts. As the depression worsened, Coughlin criticized the relief measures of the Hoover administration and presented his own solution gleaned from the social encyclicals of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI. In the 1932 presidential campaign, the radio orator supported the candidacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After Roosevelt's election, Coughlin endeavored to influence the policies of the new president. Although Roosevelt refused to implement his suggested reforms, he continued to support the New Deal for two years. By March, 1935, however, the priest had become discouraged by the essentially conservative nature of Roosevelt's reforms[1] and

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[1]William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. xii, Basil Rauch, The History of The New Deal (New York: Capricorn Books Ed., 1963), p. xiii.

grew increasingly critical of the President. By the end of the year, he was in open rebellion.

The rebellion of 1935 culminated in the formation of the Union Party whose members endeavored to defeat Roosevelt's bid for a second term. The failure of the party to achieve its goal caused Father Coughlin to radically alter the direction of his career.

In this study, I trace the development of Coughlin's disillusionment with the Roosevelt administration, analyze his contribution to the formation of the Union Party and his role in the 1936 political campaign, explain the reasons for the failure, and assess its effect on Coughlin's subsequent actions.

In preparing this study, I have benefitted from the help of a great many individuals and I am happy to acknowledge the many kindnesses they have shown me. The staffs of Waldo Library, Western Michigan University, Mandell Library, Kalamazoo College, Nazareth College Library and the Michigan Historical Collection, University of Michigan Library provided me with essential material and met my every request with patience and consideration. Professor Graham Hawks of Western Michigan University Department of History read the manuscript in its entirety and without his perceptive criticisms and suggestions it would never have reached completion. My wife, Barbara Clark Parsons, cannot be thanked by mere words. Her unfailing good humor, intelligent criticism and skillful typing made the project possible. Whatever errors of fact or interpretation remain, however, are solely my responsibility.

I

Charles Edward Coughlin was born in Hamilton, Ontario on October 25, 1891. Although born and raised in Canada, he was an American citizen. His father, a native of Indiana, did not relinquish his citizenship when he moved to Ontario. His mother, a Canadian, was naturalized after her marriage. He attended parochial elementary school in Hamilton. Then, at the age of twelve, went to Toronto to study with the Basilian priests at St. Michael's College. He remained there for thirteen years, completing secondary school, college and seminary training. On June 29, 1916, he was ordained a member of the Basilian Order.[1]

Coughlin's intellectual interests as a student proved important in his development as a radio orator. He excelled in literature, philosophy and public speaking. Classmates and teachers recalled his ability to quote long Shakespearean passages and his natural flair for drama.

The new priest spent seven years teaching English, Greek and History at Assumption College, Sandwich, Ontario. Along with his pedagogic duties, Coughlin also directed the "little theatre" group and coached football.[2] Had the Catholic hierarchy not decided to revise the structure of Canon Law in late 1917, he might have spent his life as an obscure teacher.

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[1] Ruth Mugglebee, Father Coughlin of the Shrine of the Little Flower (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1933), p. 93.

[2] Louis B. Ward, Father Charles E. Coughlin: An Authorized Biography (Detroit: Tower Publications, Inc., 1933), p. 15.

The Basilian Order was originally established as a "pious society", an organization which combined the features of both religious and secular orders. Under the new code of Canon Law of 1918, all such societies were required to disband and the members allowed to join a religious order or to remain secular priests. Father Coughlin chose the latter and was formally incardiated into the Diocese of Detroit by its bishop, Michael J. Gallagher, on February 26, 1923.[3]

Coughlin served at several parishes during his first three years in the diocese. He assisted at St. Agnes' and St. Leo's in Detroit, Sts. Peter and Paul's in North Branch, and St. Augustine's in Kalamazoo. His reputation as a pulpit orator grew quite rapidly. Regularly, parishioners phoned the rectory of his assigned parish to inquire at which Mass he was going to preach.[4] This talent helped bring him to the attention of Bishop Gallagher.

Father Coughlin received his assignment to Royal Oak in May, 1926. The Bishop, after attending the canonization of St. Therese of the Little Flower of Jesus, wanted to erect a shrine in her honor. The burgeoning population of Detroit, overflowing into the suburbs, made a new parish necessary. The Bishop established the new parish, the Shrine of the Little Flower of Jesus, with Father Coughlin as pastor.[5]

Conditions in Royal Oak were not conducive to easy success. The diocese advanced $79,000 to finance the construction of the new

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[3]Ibid., p. 16.

[4]Charles J. Tull, Father Coughlin and the New Deal (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965), p. 2.

[5]Ward, op. cit., pp. 17-23.

church, a sum that had to be repaid. The tense conditions in the neighborhood, caused by friction between Catholics and fundamentalist, Bible Belt Protestants from the Southern and Border states, retarded growth. The Ku Klux Klan evidenced its active hostility by burning a cross on the church lawn.

In September, 1926, Father Coughlin, through a mutual friend, met Leo J. Fitzpatrick, station manager of WJR, Detroit. During their conversation, he explained the problems that he faced. Fitzpatrick thought that the story of the young priest struggling to build a suburban parish while combating heavy indebtedness and intolerance might make an effective radio broadcast. The two men negotiated an agreement in which station WJR agreed to provide free air time while Coughlin paid the cost of the telephone lines used to carry his voice from the Shrine to the studio, which came to $58 a week.[6] Fitzpatrick scheduled the first broadcast for the third Sunday in October, 1926.

Coughlin made his first radio sermon dressed in his vestments and spoke directly from the altar of the Shrine. He denounced religious bigotry and contrasted the pious message of St. Therese with the bigoted doctrine of the Klan.[7] The initial effort was surprisingly successful. WJR received enthusiastic letters not only from the Detroit area but also from states throughout the Midwest. Fitzpatrick and his associates decided to carry Coughlin as a regular Sunday afternoon feature.

The priest entitled his weekly program the "Golden Hour of the

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[6] Mugglebee, op. cit., pp. 161-71.

[7] Ibid.

Little Flower" and directed it primarily toward children. Seldom during the first years did comments on political and economic affairs appear in the discourses.

Before progressing further, it is perhaps well to analyze the basis of Coughlin's radio popularity. Most observers credit his appeal to his beautiful baritone voice and the ease, enthusiastic sincerity and comforting tone of absolute self-confidence with which he spoke. One critic has described it as:

> A voice of such mellow richness, such manly, heartwarming, confidential intimacy, such emotional and ingratiating charm, that anyone tuning past it almost automatically returns to hear it again. It is without doubt one of the great speaking voices of the twentieth century. Warmed by the touch of Irish brogue, it lingered over words and enriched their emotional content. It was a voice made for promises. [8]

Furthermore, Coughlin was a master of alliteration and of vivid imagery. He combined the formal eloquence of pulpit oratory with slashing colloquialisms. As the depression worsened and its victims grew increasingly insecure and fearful, Father Coughlin became the focal point for their hopes and dreams.

The success of Coughlin's radio hour steadily increased. In the fall of 1929, two new stations, WMAQ, Chicago and WLW, Cincinnati, joined WJR in broadcasting his speeches. By 1930, the program had become so popular that Coughlin spoke over the basis network of the Columbia Broadcasting System.[9]

The economic collapse of 1929 and the ensuing depression

[8] Wallace Stegner, "The Radio Priest and His Flock", The Aspirin Age 1919-1941, ed. Isabel Leighton (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 234.

[9] Ward, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

profoundly affected the priest so that he radically altered his radio policies. Coughlin made his first serious departure from strictly religious material on January 6, 1930. He spoke on the menace of communism in America. He launched an all-out assault on the evils of Bolshevism, and particularly stressed the degradation of family life within Russia. The response which the broadcast elicited shocked Coughlin. He was deluged with letters criticizing his attack on Russian Communism.[10]

The negative response convinced Coughlin that far too many Americans were oblivious to the communist menace. To arouse their awareness, he devoted the remaining broadcasts of the 1929-1930 season to a hard-hitting denouncement of communism. While criticizing the intellectual basis and suppositions of Marxist-Leninism, the priest also endeavored to reform American society. He demanded that American capitalists eliminate communism's appeal by providing a decent standard of living for their workers. The response to his extended denunciation was, on the whole, favorable. Coughlin then turned his attention to the increasing severity of the depression. He began a series of criticisms of the Federal government for its failure to relieve the people's suffering.

By the late fall of 1930, the United States had been involved in the depression for nearly a year. Conditions continued to deteriorate with no relief in sight. The Royal Oak pastor entered the battle

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[10] Ibid., pp. 65-71.

offering the principles of social justice, set forth by Leo XIII in his encyclical Rerum Novarum, as a solution. His indictment of unregulated capitalism, the international bankers, and the theory of rugged individualism made him a champion of the downtrodden.

Throughout 1931, Coughlin urged the reform of the capitalistic system. His attempts to alleviate the lot of the suffering masses brought him into conflict with those whose conservative economic and social beliefs caused them to resist his proposed reforms. His desire to see the government protect the rights of the workers and promulgate programs to relieve the depression made it inevitable that he would soon attack the relief policies of President Hoover.

Beginning as a religious orator who "avoid [ed] prejudical subjects, all controversy and especially all bigotry", [11] Father Coughlin had, by 1932, progressed to the front ranks of those demanding a solution to the depression. Within the next year, he would become one of the most vitriolic critics of the Hoover administration and an active proponent of a young Democratic politician named Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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[11] An interview in The Detroit Free Press, January 17, 1927 quoted in William V. Shannon, The American Irish (New York: The MacMillan Co. 1963), p. 299.

II

During the latter part of 1931, Father Coughlin entered the mainstream of American political protest with his denouncement of Herbert Hoover's failure to alleviate the depression. As the weeks passed, he became increasingly disgusted with the President's half-hearted efforts. As the radio speeches demonstrate, his criticism grew increasingly more caustic.

Three of the major administration programs to which Coughlin objected were the local theory of relief, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the Federal Farm Loan Bank. On November 30, he scornfully rejected President Hoover's argument that relief was a local issue. He pointed out the inability of the local agencies to handle the increased number of applicants and questioned the rationale of a government that would lend millions to foreign nations yet allow its people to starve.[1]

In early January, 1932, Coughlin attacked the proposed Reconstruction Finance Corporation. He called it a two billion dollar dole extended to banks, to industries and to capital in general. He further criticized, as financial socialism, the attempt to restore the prosperity of 1928 and 1929 by a "trickle down" theory of relief. It was the priest's fear that such action would give unlimited power and money to a few individuals and thereby increase the severity of the depression.[2]

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[1] Charles E. Coughlin, Father Coughlin's Radio Discourses 1931-1932 (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1932), pp. 127-29.

[2] Ibid., pp. 148-50.

The Federal Farm Loan Bank came under fire for its high foreclosure rate. Coughlin accused the institution of seizing 451 farm properties daily. He labeled the bank "an agent of torture and destruction and confiscation." He was especially critical of Hoover's proposed remedies for the farm problem. In his attack upon the bank, Coughlin also discounted the Agricultural Marketing Act as having wasted two billion dollars without lessening farm misery.[3]

Coughlin's continued opposition produced an important increase in the response of his audience. He estimated that he received over one million letters favoring his position. This overwhelming flood of correspondence reinforced the priest's conviction that he represented the distressed masses.[4]

The handling of the issue of a soldiers' bonus completed Coughlin's disillusionment with the Hoover administration. Throughout the spring of 1932, the priest agitated strongly for the passage of the controversial Soldiers' Bonus Bill. He considered it doubly valuable first, for the aid it would provide to the veterans and their families and second, as a feasible method of devaluating the dollar and taking the nation off the gold standard. He appeared before the House Ways and Means Committee on April 12, and outlined his views, with little avail.[5]

When the bonus march began in June, Coughlin favored it. He made a personal contribution of five thousand dollars to help alleviate

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[3] Ibid., pp. 150-53.

[4] Tull, op. cit., p. 12.

[5] Ibid.

the veterans' suffering. Hoover's tactless and brutal handling of the marchers enraged Coughlin. He spoke out bitterly against the administration and promised retribution in November.[6]

In the spring of 1932, Father Coughlin had climbed aboard the Roosevelt bandwagon. The priest, accompanied by Detroit Mayor Frank Murphy, visited Roosevelt in New York City and presumably established an alliance. The Roosevelt Papers contain a series of telegrams which trace the development of the association. On July 2, Coughlin sent Roosevelt a message of congratulations on winning the Democratic presidential nomination. He said in part "Sincere congratulations on your speech. I am with you to the end. Say the word and I will follow." They met again at Albany in August and, although there is no record of the conversation, relations appear to have been amicable.[7]

The priest also came to an agreement with Roosevelt on the Jimmy Walker case. The ebullient mayor of New York was under investigation for various fraudulent activities. Coughlin championed his cause, pronouncing the charges against him communist inspired and a Republican plot. He wrote to Roosevelt several times requesting that he intercede on Walker's behalf. Roosevelt, not desiring to lose the priest's support in the campaign, responded that " I am, as you know, giving the defense every latitude and I am being scrupulously careful not to make up my mind in any way until the

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[6] New York Times, August 10, 1932.

[7] Tull, op. cit., p. 15.

case is wholly in." [8] This satisfied Coughlin.

The 1932 campaign gave Coughlin a chance to exercise his latent power. The priest continued his blistering attack upon the Hoover administration. Although never specifically endorsing the Democratic candidate, Coughlin made it eminently clear where his sentiments lay. He scored the President for his failure to solve the economic problems of the depression and advocated devaluation of the dollar as an essential step in the recovery process. When the results of the 1932 election were in, the priest considered himself in a great part responsible for the Roosevelt victory.[9]

Coughlin's influence in the election should not be minimized. The grave condition of the nation when he began his broadcasting career gave an impact to his message. People demanded to know who was responsible for the collapse and Coughlin, with his magnificent voice and persuasive manner, conveniently supplied a scapegoat in the "international bankers" and the communists. Furthermore, his clerical vocation lent weight to his argument. The people felt they could trust his pronouncements because he was a priest dedicated to social justice, not a politician seeking votes.

Coughlin must be considered sincere in his motivation. He was deeply affected by the suffering visible throughout the country. His home area, Detroit, was especially devastated; all he had to do was observe the desperate plight of the thousands of unemployed in the

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[8] Ibid., p. 17.

[9] Ibid., p. 22.

midst of abundant food and consumer goods to become aroused over the government failure. His remedies were strictly in keeping with the social teachings of the Church.[10]

The number of votes that the radio priest delivered to Roosevelt will never be known. The important point was his feeling that he was in part responsible for the victory. He considered himself an unofficial member of the New Deal administration and undoubtedly expected to exercise considerable influence on administration policies.

Roosevelt's position in regard to Coughlin is an interesting one. The President was happy to have the priest's support but apparently did not return Coughlin's personal admiration. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt made the statement that her husband "disliked and distrusted" the priest from the beginning.[11] Rexford G. Tugwell, an early "braintruster", recalled a statement made to him by Roosevelt concerning such figures as Coughlin, Huey Long and Dr. Townsend. He said "We must tame these fellows and make them useful to us."[12] The new Administration began with Father Coughlin, due to his high regard for Roosevelt, actively supporting the New Deal program. Before it was over, Coughlin would be its most violent critic.

Coughlin and the new President co-operated closely during the first hundred days of the new Administration. The priest attended the

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[10] Ibid., p. 21.

[11] Ibid., p. 22.

[12] Rexford G. Tugwell, The Democratic Roosevelt (New York: Garden City Publishers, 1957), p. 350.

inauguration and, later in the month, returned to Washington for a personal visit with Roosevelt. The New York Times reported that the President asked him to continue his support in the farm areas. He acquiesced on the condition that some form of inflation be initiated.[13]

Coughlin's reaction to the Detroit banking crisis mirrored his continuing belief that he was an unofficial member of the Roosevelt team. In March, 1933, the Union Guardian Trust Company collapsed and threatened to involve the still solvent Detroit banks in its failure. In his broadcasts, the priest alleged that the Detroit bankers had granted themselves fraudulent loans to repay the losses they had sustained in the 1929 stock market crash. For this reason, Coughlin opposed the use of Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds to aid the Detroit banks. Secretary of the Treasury William Woodin, cognizant of the many attacks on the Detroit banking community, appointed federal officials to take charge of the resources of both the Guardian National Bank of Commerce and the First National Bank of Detroit.[14]

On March 26, the priest, acting without authorization as a spokesman for the government, launched a savage attack against the Detroit bankers. He charged that they had organized a special holding company, the Detroit Bankers Company, to avoid liability as bank stockholders. E.D.Stair, a member of the governing board of the Detroit Bankers Committee and publisher of the Detroit Free Press, was

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[13] New York Times, March 23, 1933.

[14] Tull, op. cit., p. 24.

singled out for special criticism. Coughlin also charged that, on the basis of inside information, sixty-three million dollars had been secretly withdrawn from the First National Bank just prior to the famous "bank holiday" of March 9, 1933. Finally, he asserted that the First National was only twelve and one half per cent liquid on February 11, rather than the eighty per cent which it claimed.[15]

The reaction to Coughlin's outburst was rapid and wide-spread. Most incensed was E.D.Stair of the Detroit Free Press who threatened to sue the priest for slander. An editorial in the Free Press entitled "Coughlin the Demagogue" accused the priest of destroying the people's confidence in the Detroit banks. The author defended his publisher by insisting that he served on the banks' board of governors out of a sense of "civic duty," receiving no salary. Furthermore, the editorial contended that the Diocese of Detroit was the largest single debtor of the First National Bank and the Church's inability to make its payments was one of the main reasons for the bank's predicament. The editorial included a personal attack against Coughlin which mirrored the editor's feeling toward the Royal Oak Pastor. It concluded, "How long will this ecclesiastical Huey Long be allowed to slander decent citizens of this city in the name of God?"[16]

The most important question eminating from the conflict was whether Coughlin spoke with any sanction from the Roosevelt administration. The Roosevelt Papers contain several documents pertinent

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[15] Ward, op. cit., pp. 179-90.

[16] Ibid., pp. 191-93.

to the issue. On March 23, a memorandum written by Marvin MacIntyre, presidential appointments secretary, stated that Coughlin called to say that if the President wanted him to go on the air and explain the Administration's newest banking measures he would be glad to do so. MacIntyre transferred the information to Secretary Woodin who was contacted by the priest.[17] What then transpired is unknown, but it is quite apparent that after the call, Coughlin considered himself authorized to speak for the Administration.

Father Coughlin definitely had some official sanction for his broadcast. Mayor Frank Murphy of Detroit had appointed him a member of the Detroit Depositor's Committee. Whether he spoke at the request of either MacIntyre or Secretary Woodin, however, is another matter. What Woodin said to the priest remains unknown. On March 27, 1933, MacIntyre sent a memorandum to Louis M. Howe, special political adviser to the President. In it, he gave his analysis of the situation:

> Confidentially, I think the Reverend Father took considerable liberties with the facts and most certainly misquoted me and misstated the case in saying that the request for him to go on the radio and to answer the Commissioner came from the administration.[18]

Whether or not Coughlin actually spoke for the Administration, the public considered his action out of order. A considerable volume of mail descended upon the President criticizing this use of a cleric. The trend of the letters seemed to demand that Roosevelt issue a

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[17] Tull, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

[18] Ibid., p. 26.

statement that the priest spoke only for himself. At the time, nothing elucidating the issue was forthcoming.

The conflict between Father Coughlin and the Detroit bankers resumed during the late summer of 1933. The priest appeared as a witness before a one man Grand Jury investigating the conditions of the Detroit banking system. Testifying before Judge Harry B. Keiden on August 24, he charged that both the Union Guardian Trust Company and the First National Bank were wrecked by the philosophy that "money in the hands of the masses is a menace." Continuing his testimony, Coughlin denounced Herbert Hoover as "attempting to cure this damnable depression by pouring gold in at the top while the people starved at the bottom." In contrast, he praised Roosevelt as ". . . a president who thinks right, who lives for the common man, who knows patience and suffering, who knows that men come before bonds and that human rights are more sacred than financial rights." [19]

The Detroit Free Press again attempted to humble the radio priest by charging that he had purchased sixty shares of stock in Kelsey-Hayes Wheel, a company involved in financial chicanery. Unconcerned by this latest attack, Coughlin accused the paper and its editor of forging his signature on the stock, although he admitted that his Radio League of the Little Flower [20] had purchased it. He then told

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[19] New York Times, August 24-25, 1933.

[20] The Radio League was founded in 1927 to help defray the heavy cost of broadcasting. Composed of members from all faiths who contributed one dollar a year, it later became an important source of funds for the National Union for Social Justice.

reporters that there would be federal indictments issued against E.D. Stair and other Detroit financiers. Special Assistant Attorney General John S. Pratt immediately denied this statement.[21]

Throughout the summer, Coughlin had been writing to various figures in the Administration endeavoring to instigate a thorough investigation of banking in Detroit. His letters to such figures as Jesse Jones, chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, William Julian, United States Treasurer and MacIntyre received no replies.[22] The failure of the Administration to acknowledge this correspondence points to an obvious conclusion: Having been caught once, the President was trying to avoid any further controversy over who was empowered to act as a spokesman.

Whether Coughlin actually represented the Roosevelt administration in the Detroit banking issue or assumed unauthorized powers still remains an enigma. However, if he acted in no official capacity, it seems strange that the President issued no official denials.Most Coughlin scholars agree that the priest was, in some nebulous capacity, being used by the Administration. When events took an awkward turn, it became politically convenient for Roosevelt to deny any connection with the priest's action.

The incident takes on added importance when viewed as the beginning of the decline of amicable Coughlin-Roosevelt relations. The priest had taken a stand favoring the controversial governmental policy of bank investigation and when sternly challenged had received

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[21] New York Times, August 25-26, 1933.

[22] Tull, op. cit., p. 31.

no support from the President. The honeymoon was rapidly ending.

The priest's radio broadcasts became increasingly more economic in orientation. Father Coughlin sincerely believed that the major problem confronting the United States in the early 1930's was a monetary one. He devoted the majority of his 1933-1934 discourses to indicting the evil machinations of the "international bankers", demanding the re-evaluation of the gold ounce to its legal maximum, and ending the "money famine." The primacy of economic issues continued throughout Coughlin's radio career and became a major factor in his break with Roosevelt.

Coughlin's chief reason for attacking international bankers was his feeling that they had greedily wrecked economic havoc for the sake of personal gain. He believed re-evaluation of the gold ounce would be a major step in ending the depression. He stated, "My friends, the fundamental cause of this depression is the stupidity of trying to retain the 1900 valuation of our gold ounce in a ratio of 12-1 in the face of the fact that this gold, as related to currency money and to outstanding credit money has been rendered absolutely impractical." [23] Coughlin claimed that the real credit dollar—gold dollar ratio had expanded to the lopsided proportion of 117-1. His plan to increase the price of gold from its $20.67 per ounce rate to $41.34, the legal ceiling, would have greatly increased the amount of money in circulation and also reduced the national debt by one half. The priest made it clear that he regarded gold as a medium of exchange, not

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[23] Ibid., p. 32.

as real wealth.[24] The money famine, according to Coughlin, had been deliberately created by the bankers to increase their own profits. He demanded that some form of controlled inflation be enacted to put the dollar back in circulation at its true value.

Other theories which Coughlin advanced complemented his basic program. He demanded the nationalization of all gold, with the government reimbursing the holders with paper currency. He advocated the recall of all "non-productive" bonds, such as World War I Liberty bonds, which he dubbed "slavery bonds", again suggesting that the bearers be repaid with paper currency.[25] The purpose of all of his schemes was to achieve inflation by the issuance of paper currency.

Although Father Coughlin's economic reform theories were more radical than those held by President Roosevelt, the priest continued his loyal support of the President. He appeared confident that the Administration would accept his currency reform theories and advised his radio audience to be patient and give Roosevelt a chance to work things out. The priest went so far as to defend the unpopular Economy Bill of March 11, which reduced veterans' pensions and federal salaries. The President, the priest maintained, was endeavoring to put the nation back to work; a far more important task than putting people on doles.[26]

An indication of Coughlin's political influence was a joint Senate-House request sent to the President asking that he be appointed as an economic advisor to the London Conference. Six senators and

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[24]Charles E. Coughlin, Money! Questions and Answers (Royal Oak, Michigan: The National Union for Social Justice, 1936), pp. 28-34.

[25]Ibid., pp. 60-62.

[26]Tull, op. cit., p. 35.

fifty-nine congressmen signed it. According to these lawmakers, Father Coughlin had "the confidence of millions of Americans." The signing senators were: Edward Thomas of Colorado, "Cotton" Ed Smith of South Carolina, Huey P. Long of Louisiana, Thomas D. Schall and Henrik Shipsted of Minnesota and William Gibbs MacAdoo of California. The House petition was signed by fifty-three Democrats and six Republicans. Twenty-eight were from the Midwest, sixteen from the Southern or Border states while the remaining twelve were widely scattered. Only two Eastern congressmen, Emanuel Celler of New York and Arthur Healy of Massachusetts, signed.[27] Professor James Shenton of Columbia University points out, in his analysis of Coughlin, that the heterogeneous backgrounds of the signers suggest "how real was the possibility that Coughlin might bridge the gap between the rural fundamentalist Protestants and the urban Irish Catholics whose antagonisms had disrupted the Democratic Party in 1924".[28] The possibility that Coughlin might be a threat to Roosevelt in 1936 was apparent as early as June of 1933.

Roosevelt did not heed the congressional petition and handled the London Economic Conference without the priest's aid. Although the President's actions concerning the conference have been widely criticized, the priest praised his message to the conference which asserted the need for independent national currencies, calling it a

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[27] Ibid.

[28] James P. Shenton, "The Coughlin Movement and the New Deal" Political Science Quarterly LXXIII (September, 1958), p. 354.

"bomb shell." Coughlin had been thrilled by Roosevelt's refusal to involve the American dollar with foreign currency at London. He continued to advocate support for Roosevelt as the answer to the depression.

The economic conditions within the nation created great pressure upon the Roosevelt administration to experiment with some form of inflation. The President compromised with the legislature and accepted the Thomas Amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act. This provision gave the Chief Executive the power to instigate any or all of the following measures: the coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, the issuance of paper currency, or the adjustment of the gold content of the dollar. The bill was a strategic retreat forced upon Roosevelt by the apparently irresistible congressional sentiment for inflation. He only accepted it as an attempt to retain as much control as possible over monetary manipulation.[29]

The President's cautious implementation of the measure disturbed the inflationists, including Coughlin. In a wire sent to the President on July 21, 1933, the priest analyzed the situation by saying:

> . . . there has been but a psychological revaluation. Our difficulties cannot be solved until there is a real revaluation. In other words, there must be an issue of federal greenbacks. Actually, there are fewer dollars in circulation today than there were a month previous.[30]

The economic issue was fast becoming a point of contention between the two individuals. When the break came, it would play a primary part.

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[29]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1958), p. 42.

[30]Tull, op. cit., p. 37.

Although Coughlin remained loyal to the President throughout 1933, he grew increasingly opposed to two major administration programs. The National Recovery Administration and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration left the priest less than enthusiastic. He saw no solution in the N.R.A. for the sagging commodity prices that plagued the nation. Also, he was critical of the low wage scales paid by many companies under the N.R.A. codes. He advocated immediate inflation to prevent it from becoming a "colossal failure." He reported to the President that his listeners "from every quarter and section of the continent" had written him concerning New Deal relief measures. He continued that "The vast majority . . . have not much faith in the National Recovery Act". [31]

Father Coughlin was even more opposed to the A.A.A. theory of crop reduction and destruction to raise farm prices. He was more sympathetic to the plight of millions of hungry citizens. Writing to Roosevelt in late September, the priest revealed his feelings toward Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace and Rexford Tugwell, the chief architects of the plan. He accused the two men of "fouling the countryside and the Mississippi River with their malodorous rottenness." He heatedly informed Roosevelt that "there is no superfluity of either cotton or wheat until every naked back has been clothed, until every empty stomach has been filled." He advanced the old Populist plank of unlimited silver coinage as the obvious solution

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[31] Ibid., p. 39.

to the problem.[32]

Up to this time, the priest had maintained a facade of public support for the New Deal. Whatever disagreement he harbored, he aired only in private correspondence to the President and other administration officials. The nature of his radio broadcasts subtly changed with the start of the new season in October, 1933. While he scrupulously refrained from direct criticism of the President, he openly indicted lesser members of the Administration and those New Deal theories which he opposed. The days of complete agreement with Roosevelt were at an end. Coughlin drew away from the New Deal.

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[32] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Politics of Upheaval (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1960), p. 23.

III

As the priest's letters became increasingly critical, Roosevelt grew interested in an accurate estimate of the support which Coughlin possessed. The priest was immensely proud of the volume of mail he was receiving and spoke of it often. To ascertain whether Coughlin's estimates were accurate, the President ordered the Post Office Department to undertake an investigation of his claims. In a twenty month study, stretching from July, 1933 to February, 1935, the Royal Oak Post Office reported cashing 65,397 money orders worth $404,145.[1] It was growing increasingly clear that the priest would be a formidable opponent if he placed himself in complete opposition to the New Deal.

The issue of silver coinage had become Coughlin's primary theme during the 1933-1934 broadcasting season. He did not believe that the President had done enough to increase the flow of money into the economy and considered the free coinage of silver as the most effective means to solve the money famine. His arguments in favor of silver as currency faithfully mirrored the standard Populist arguments. He felt it would: place more money in circulation, cause a rise in prices, and expand American foreign trade with such silver-using nations as China and Japan.[2] These ideas echoed the demands of the highly vocal "silver bloc" in Congress led by Senators Edward Thomas of Oklahoma, Key Pittman of Nevada, and Burton Wheeler of Montana.

While promoting the cause of silver inflation, Coughlin, somewhat

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[1] Tull, op. cit., p. 41.

[2] Ibid.

illogically, continued his defense of the government monetary policy. On November 3, 1933, the priest unequivocally predicted that the President would remonetize silver in the near future. He was sure that the President "has not forgotten his public vow which pledged him to a sound and adequate money." The priest then uttered what was to become his most famous statement "It is either Roosevelt or ruin." [3]

The controversial nature of Coughlin's broadcasts continued. In late November, the priest criticized Alfred E. Smith, former Democratic presidential candidate, for his opposition to Roosevelt's financial policies. In a slashing personal attack, Coughlin accused Smith of being a "paid stooge" of the large banking interests. Smith replied in kind; and the effect of the feud between the country's most prominent Catholic priest and its most prominent Catholic layman was disheartening. The Catholic hierarchy and press divided on the issue. Coughlin's willingness to descend to personal invective against a fellow Catholic weakened his support among Church members. The Administration, witnessing the bitterness of his speech, reaffirmed its wariness of his emotionalism and vitriolic tongue.

In early 1934, Coughlin attacked the government for its failure to enact monetary legislation. His new whipping boy was the Federal Reserve System. He criticized it for retaining the recently nationalized gold rather than depositing it with the Treasury Department. The priest became an inviterate foe of the system and worked unceasingly for its abolition.

Coughlin continued his indictment of the government relief programs

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[3] Ibid., p. 51.

throughout 1934. The N.R.A. was again attacked; the priest labeled its forty cent per hour minimum wage as "slavery" and placed most of the blame for its inequalities on the manufacturers who he claimed were attempting to "emasculate" the program.[4] The Civil Works Administration also received severe censure. The priest asserted that ". . . its presence among us is a confession of past stupidity. Its continuance among us is a certain step toward fascism."[5] Although still favoring the President, Father Coughlin issued almost continuous indictments of the New Deal over his radio network.

Coughlin's positive program for alleviating the depression called for the replacement of American capitalism, which he called "doomed . . . and not worth trying to save" by some form of "socialized" or "state" capitalism. He argued that since modern capitalism had refused to reform itself there was no alternative but for the government to control credit. On March 11, 1934, the priest outlined his own six-point program for the solution of the financial problems facing the nation:

1. The nationalization and revaluation of all gold.
2. The restoration of silver coinage and the nationalization of all silver.
3. The establishment of a government bank to control currency and credit.
4. The complete nationalization of all credit.
5. Legislation to extend credit not only for production but for consumption.
6. The total elimination of national government bonds.[6]

His continued pressure, coupled with that from other inflationists,

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[4] New York Times, February 5, 1934.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Tull, op. cit., p. 54.

elicited government action.

On April 24, 1934, Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau released for publication the names of all persons and organizations which had made substantial investments in silver. Done with full approval of the President, this move was shrewdly intended to block silver legislation from an inflation-minded Congress by discrediting the motivation of many of the leading advocates of silver coinage.[7] The most interesting name to appear on the list was that of Father Coughlin's Radio League of the Little Flower which held approximately five hundred thousand ounces. The purchases were made by Miss Amy Collins, Coughlin's secretary, who claimed that she had made the investment solely on her own responsibility. She insisted that the priest had no knowledge of the finances of the Radio League. Coughlin, denying that he had ever purchased an ounce of silver, bitterly assailed Morgenthau as "a tool of Wall Street" and pointedly praised silver as a "gentile" metal.[8]

The results of the exposure are important. Although the uproar over the silver list was short-lived, Coughlin's reputation was somewhat damaged. However, there was no evidence that the priest had personally profitted from the transaction. The episode marked the first serious break between Coughlin and the Administration. In all his indictments of New Deal policy, the priest had never personally attacked Roosevelt. In this case, Roosevelt, as well as Morgenthau, was responsible for the exposé. It would appear that the President, who

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[7] Schlesinger, The Coming of the New Deal, pp. 250-51.

[8] New York Times, April 29, 1934.

never personally liked the priest, no longer considered it necessary to avoid arousing his ire as he had in 1932-33. The warm rapport of the post-election period had become polite neutrality by 1934.

With the close of his radio season in April, 1934, Father Coughlin temporarily receded from the scene. During his absence, what has been considered as the First New Deal came to a conclusion. The priest had expected the President to implement more sweeping economic reforms than the essentially conservative ones of the period. His continued pressure, via telegrams and letters requested of his radio audience, had forced the President to resort to the drastic measure of releasing the silver list. Coughlin continued to expand his opposition to the New Deal until, in 1936, he became the moving force behind a political attempt to challenge Roosevelt.

When Coughlin returned to the air in September, 1934, his attitude toward the New Deal had markedly changed. In a form letter, he asked his radio audience:

> Do you want me to preach 'amen' both to the sins of omission and commission which have been perpetrated in the name of the New Deal, or . . . do you want me to oppose both reactionary politicians as well as the new type of rubber-stamp sycophants who prefer to follow the dictates of the 'drain trust' rather than the mandate of the voters? [9]

Only the priest knew the response to this loaded question but the very phrasing points out Coughlin's contempt for the New Deal and its architects.

The major question now was whether his fiercely loyal audience

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[9] Tull, op. cit., p. 59.

would remain so if he deserted the extremely popular Roosevelt. Throughout the next year, his statements vacillated from eulogistic praise for the President to violent condemnation. By November, 1935, he had decided upon opposition.

Roosevelt, recognizing the inevitability of the break, decided upon a two step approach. He attempted to delay the break for as long as possible, and then, when it came, to make it Coughlin's decision. To implement this policy, the President made it a practice to avoid public mention of the priest, to use eminent Catholic laymen, such as Detroit Mayor Frank Murphy and S.E.C. Executive Joseph Kennedy, as peace emissaries and to grant the priest minor favors.[10] A good example of the latter was the personal attention given Coughlin's inquiry concerning a naval commission for a fellow priest. Roosevelt sent a memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy asking "Will you let me know if we can do anything about this? In many ways it might be helpful."[11] When viewed in terms of such a plan, Coughlin's vacillation during 1935 is understandable.

The priest opened his 1934-1935 broadcasting season with an endorsement of the New Deal. He said, "More than ever I am in favor of the New Deal," and then pledged himself to support it as long as he possessed the power of speech.[12] One week later, Coughlin deplored the lack of clear-cut distinctions between the two major parties and

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 60.

[12] New York Times, October 29, 1934.

hopefully suggested that they "relinquish the skeletons of their putrefying carcasses to the halls of a historical museum." He also gave notice to the Democratic party that it had two years to solve the monetary distribution problem or face "political death." [13]

On November 11, Father Coughlin presented his contribution to the reformation of American politics. On that day, he announced the formation of the National Union for Social Justice. This organization was composed of persons of all faiths who believed in the rightful necessity of social justice in the economic life of the United States. Coughlin's motivation stemmed from the thousands of letters which he received. The priest felt that they gave him unerring sight into the temper of the times. He states:

> I am not boasting when I say to you that I know the pulse of the people. I know it better than all your newspaper men. I know it better than do all your industrialists with your paid for advice. I am not exaggerating when I tell you of their demand for social justice which, like a tidal wave, is sweeping over this nation. [14]

He hoped to create an organization through which public opinion would influence administration policies.

The National Union was based upon sixteen principles[15] promulgated by Father Coughlin. Essentially, they were a mixture of midwestern agrarian reforms and the social encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. Many of them had previously appeared in the Minnesota

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[13] Charles E. Coughlin, A Series of Lectures on Social Justice (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1935), p. 8.

[14] Ibid., p. 16.

[15] See Appendix 1.

Farmer-Labor Party platform.[16] These principles were general and, to a large extent, outlined the various reforms which the priest had championed. They contained demands for: a living wage, control of private property for the public good, absolute government control of all currency, a fair profit for the farmer, the right of labor to organize, and the priority of human rights over property rights.

With a call for five thousand members for the Union, Father Coughlin took another step in the direction of a complete break with the New Deal. His attempts to establish a balance of power between the two major parties gave evidence that he was not afraid of para-political organizations and that his passive discontent with the Roosevelt administration was ending.

The formation of the National Union precipitated an immediate reaction in Washington. Letters poured in upon the President. They expressed a questioning attitude. Coughlin's audience was uncertain whether, by joining the National Union, they would help Roosevelt.[17] The priest appeared to recognize this tone, for in his regular broadcast on November 25, he declared that it would be wrong to suspect the President's motives in any way.[18]

Coughlin, now that his break with the Administration was rapidly becoming a reality, needed allies. His most obvious choice was Senator Huey P. Long, Democrat from Louisiana. Both men had supported

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[16]Bruce Bonner Mason, "American Political Protest, 1932-1936" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Texas), p. 92..

[17]Lowell K. Dyson, "Father Coughlin and the Election of 1936" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Dept. of Political Science, Columbia University), p. 25.

[18]Coughlin, A Series of Lectures on Social Justice, p. 35.

Roosevelt in 1932 and, by 1934, had grown disillusioned with the New Deal. The alliance was a logical one; the Senator fought the Administration from the congressional floor while the priest used the radio. Each had advantages to offer in case an alliance were concluded. There is little doubt that "the Kingfish" aspired to the presidency. To achieve the goal, he needed Northern and Eastern support which it appeared Coughlin could supply. The priest, were he to desert the President, would need another dynamic personality to promote. He could not personally aspire to the executive office because of his foreign birth and clerical vocation. Jim Farley, Democratic national chairman, carried out a nation-wide survey to determine the effect of Long as a presidential candidate. The result indicated that an amalgamation of these two forces would provide stiff political competition for the established parties.[19]

The first issue on which the two leaders effectively collaborated was the defeat of American entrance into the World Court. Roosevelt had requested the Senate to approve the entry of the United States into the court. This move toward internationalism aroused Coughlin's latent isolationism, previously seen in his reaction to the London Economic Conference. In his broadcast of January 27, he announced that the proposed entrance would ". . . hand over our national sovereignity to the World Court, a creation of and for the League of

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[19]James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1948), p. 51.

Nations." He stressed that while agreeing with the Administration's attempts at social reform, he could not desecrate the memories of Washington and Jefferson by accepting this measure.[20] In a surprising move, the priest returned to the air the following day to reiterate his feelings in the last-ditch endeavor to defeat the measure. He called for a torrent of telegrams to be sent to the legislators protesting American entrance.[21] Long led the opposition on the Senate floor and, with the help of Coughlin's telegram barrage, defeated the issue by a 52 to 36 vote. It was later reported that over 40,000 telegrams descended upon Washington in the two days prior to the vote.[22]

The apparent importance of the priest's call for cables greatly encouraged him. Yet, it must be remembered that in 1935, America was profoundly isolationistic in spirit. It would appear more logical that Coughlin's action had given direction to a widely held national feeling rather than demonstrated loyalty on the part of his audience. The telegrams represent the opposition to involvement in international affairs more than blind obedience to the priest's dictates. The victory, however, gave him confidence to enlarge the scope of his attack on the New Deal.

On March 3, 1935, Father Coughlin delivered an analysis of the first two years of the New Deal. He accused Roosevelt of having "compromised with the money changers and conciliated with monopolistic

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[20] Coughlin, A Series of Lectures on Social Justice, pp. 124-25.

[21] New York Times, January 29, 1935.

[22] Ibid., January 30, 1935.

industry" and of ". . . holding out the olive branch to those whose policies are crimsoned with the theories of sovietism and international socialism." He remarked further that:

> The first two years of the new deal [sic] will long be remembered as the years which enunciated a new philosophy for future years to practice. However, they were years which, despite its [sic] gracious pronouncements, are still wedded to the basic evils of capitalism, to the fundamental errors of the old deal. The money changers have not been driven from the temple.[23]

This savage indictment elicited the first administration response to Coughlin.

On March 4, General Hugh Johnson, former N.R.A. administrator, delivered a radio rebuttle which took to task both Coughlin and Long. The General accused them of leading a lunatic fringe and called them a menace to the nation. He concluded the speech by saying "These two men are raging up and down this land preaching not construction, but destruction—not reform but revolution, not peace but—a sword. I think we are dealing with a couple of Catilines, and that it is high time for someone to say so."[24] The attack shocked the priest. Never before had an administration confidant dignified his criticism with an answer. Coughlin, fearful of its effect on his following, reversed his position.

The national network granted both Long and the priest time to answer the General. The Kingfish surprised everyone by limiting his response to a defense of his "share-our-wealth" movement. His speech

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[23] Coughlin, A Series Of Lectures on Social Justice, pp. 194-95,

[24] New York Times, March 5, 1935.

attracted considerable favorable response.[25] Coughlin, influenced perhaps by the tone of his correspondence, reiterated his support for the New Deal. This caused Long to become somewhat disgusted with the priest and weakened their already tenuous alliance.[26]

The short rapprochement between Roosevelt and Coughlin was ended by the President's veto of the Patman Bill. On May 5, Coughlin had endorsed this plan which provided for an issue of greenbacks to finance the bonus payments. Using the technique which had defeated the World Court issue, Coughlin requested his audience to bombard Congress with wires favoring the bill. Thousands complied and the measure passed by a large margin.[27] The President, firmly opposed to greenback inflation, vetoed the bill. To reinforce his stand, the President appeared before Congress and requested it to sustain the veto. Contrary to Coughlin's wishes, the Senate supported Roosevelt and the priest was again alienated.

Coughlin now began a concerted effort to marshal his public support. Rather than leave the air in early April as he had done since 1930, he purchased thirteen additional weeks of air time.[28] He also initiated a series of public rallies to stimulate enthusiasm for the National Union for Social Justice and to increase its effectiveness as a pressure group. He scheduled major rallies in Detroit, Cleveland, and New York. At these three gatherings, a combined total

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[25] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 247.

[26] Dyson, op. cit., p. 27.

[27] New York Times, May 7, 1935.

[28] Tull, op. cit., p. 93.

of 63,000 people heard the priest criticize the capitalistic system and the Roosevelt administration.[29] During the early spring, Coughlin endeavored to establish a foundation for continued opposition to Roosevelt.

His actions during the summer of 1935 were in complete contrast to the previous period. Coughlin made no further personal appearances, his radio discourses were moderate in tone and he recalled his congressional lobbyist, Louis Ward, before the session closed. The lack of activity caused many rumors concerning the future of the priest and the National Union. The only clarifying statement which he issued was a denial that the Union was to be disbanded and that he would return to the Roosevelt fold. He informed the New York Times that "I am neither supporting Roosevelt, nor opposing him. I am determined to support principles, and not men. The major principle is the nationalization of credit."[30]

Coughlin scholars attributed the silence to the death of Huey Long. The ebullient senator from Louisiana had been assassinated in the Louisiana capitol on September 8, 1935. Any plans which Coughlin might have had for future political activity in conjunction with the Senator were immediately ended. It was obvious that none among Long's followers could match his appeal on the national level. The priest was forced to consider carefully his next move.

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[29] Ibid., pp. 95-97.

[30] New York Times, October 17, 1935.

Coughlin crossed his Rubicon on November 17, 1935. On this date, the priest and the President broke irrevocably. Apparently confident of the loyalty of his audience, Coughlin blatantly announced that the principles of the New Deal and social justice were "unalterably opposed". He charged that the Roosevelt administration had embraced both communism and plutocracy and was no longer deserving of support.[31] The long heralded break had become a reality.

The causes of the break stretched back to the Detroit banking issue of March, 1933, and included such controversial occurrences as the release of the silver holdings list, the battle over the World Court, General Johnson's speech and the defeat of the Patman Bonus Bill. In the final analysis, however, it was caused by two distinct but related reasons. The priest based his solution to the depression essentially upon a policy of inflation. Roosevelt had initiated inflation in 1933, had seen it fail and was no longer interested in it. Secondly, the priest considered himself partially responsible for Roosevelt's election. He therefore felt that he should be included as an intimate of the Administration, being allowed to function as a private adviser and a public spokesman. He did not compare intellectually with the other members of the "brains trust" and so was unfit for the first and, given Roosevelt's own radio ability, completely unnecessary as the second.

The priest felt that his program must be enacted before the depression could be expected to lessen its severity. The political alternatives left open to him were few. It was possible for him to

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[31] Ibid., November 18, 1935.

abandon radio broadcasting, but his crusading zeal prevented that. He could return to his support of Roosevelt, but that meant desertion of his inflationary principles with no hope of future success, for Roosevelt would give nothing in return. He could endeavor to make a bargain with the Republicans, but the available candidates were unappealing and the chances of success slim. Coughlin accepted the final alternative, to ignore the established political machinery and to utilize the National Union as a para-political pressure group to influence the election of the "right" men to Congress. Third party political action resulted!

IV

Father Coughlin's blunt denunciation of the New Deal on November 17, appears to have exaggerated his true feelings. A more accurate representation of his feelings came from his radio broadcast of December 1, 1935. The priest qualified his statement that the principles of the New Deal and social justice were "unalterably opposed" by stating that he had no desire to obstruct the New Deal but wanted only to perfect it. He explained his new statement by saying that he opposed its extravagant experiments and reactionary tendencies. Coughlin, further modifying his views, now contended that the President was not "the only man who can save America".[1] Until the formation of the Union Party, he maintained this approach.

Another indication of the priest's interest in political action was his continued search for allies. During the first week of December, 1935, Francis E. Townsend, the originator of the Townsend Old Age Pension Plan, visited Royal Oak. Political observers predicted that the two men would establish an alliance, but, the California doctor emphatically denied that one had even been considered. He reported to the New York Times, however, that Coughlin had endorsed his pension scheme.[2]

The last broadcast of 1935 continued Coughlin's movement toward independent political action. On December 29, he announced his desire to inaugurate a weekly magazine "to interpret the news." He said that

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[1] New York Times, December 2, 1935.

[2] Ibid., December 10, 1935.

he would do so if one million listeners would write in their approval.[3] Whether he received the requested response is known only to Coughlin; the magazine, entitled Social Justice, appeared on March 13, 1936.

The magazine faithfully mirrored the opinions of its creator. Much of the material contained reflected Coughlin's background. In the interpretation of foreign affairs, his Catholicism was evident in the magazine's assault against the Republican governments of Spain and Mexico as communistic. His Irish background led to the indictment of the British as the perverters of American foreign policy. Finally, his desire to see the depression conquered caused him to praise the achievements of Mussolini and Hitler in successfully solving the economic problems of Italy and Germany. There was little doubt who directed the policy of Social Justice.

The physical structure of the magazine also proved interesting. It was strictly limited to sixteen pages, perhaps in honor of the sixteen principles of social justice. Coughlin was determined to operate the paper without commercial advertising of any nature; he was successful until late 1938. Furthermore, he made virtually no use of pictures until the political compaign of 1936 was well under way. The usual breakdown of the magazine's content was: two pages of national news, one page each for world news, labor, agriculture, youth, women's news, letters to the editor, and National Union for Social Justice bulletins, and two pages devoted to turning the "searchlight on the Money Changers" with the remaining space devoted

[3] Ibid., December 30, 1935.

to the reprint of the entire text of the priest's radio broadcast, his "weekly letter" to the readers, and the editorial page. All of the articles contained an obvious editorial slant supporting Coughlin's personal theories.[4]

Coughlin's establishment of the magazine brought him into contact with another figure who was to become a close confidant. Following the announcement of a weekly publication, E.Perrin Schwarz, city editor of the Milwaukee Journal, wrote to the priest and outlined his ideas on how the new magazine should be organized. Coughlin included his suggestions on one of the Sunday broadcasts, then telephoned him the next day to offer the editorship of the new weekly. Schwarz accepted and remained with Social Justice until Coughlin was forced to suspend publication in 1942.[5]

With the publication of Social Justice, Coughlin possesed a potent auxiliary weapon to complement his radio broadcasts. It allowed him to expand his audience, overcome an increasingly unfavorable press image, and effectively indoctrinate his followers. It became his major line with the expanding National Union, aiding him in directing its activities through weekly bulletins. The priest's increasing use of Social Justice as an avowedly political organ was another step in the direction of third party action in 1936.

Another prominent change which eminated from the break with the President was the reformation and re-activation of the National Union.

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[4]Social Justice, March 13, 1936 to November 23, 1936.

[5]Tull, op. cit., p. 113.

Coughlin now aimed at establishing a minimum of one chapter of the Union in every congressional district in the nation. To accomplish this task, he undertook a total reconstruction of the organization. Originally, it was divided into local units composed of no less than one hundred members. When some units, particularly in the rural areas, found it difficult to recruit so large a number, Coughlin lowered the minimum unit membership to twenty-five in communities of less than one thousand and to fifty in towns of one thousand or more.[6] To prevent the structure from becoming unwieldly, no single unit could enroll more than two hundred fifty members.

Each local chapter of the National Union was empowered to elect a president, as was each congressional district. The activities of each state organization were to be directed by an elected state supervisor. The national leadership consisted of twelve regional supervisors, responsible to the national president, Father Coughlin.[7]

The priest recommended that unit meetings be conducted at least once a month, at which time the president was to read a special message from Coughlin. The members were strongly requested to devote a substantial segment of the meeting to the serious discussion on one of the sixteen principles of social justice. In an attempt to thoroughly imbue the membership with Coughlin's monetary theories, the editors of Social Justice pushed Coughlin's financial treatise, Money! Questions and Answers, as material essential for discussion.[8]

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[6] Social Justice, March 20, 1936.

[7] Ibid., March 27, 1936.

[8] Ibid.

The early course of the Union did not run smoothly. Resentment existed over the requirement of mandatory recitation of the Social Justice pledge at the close of each meeting. It read "I pledge to follow the example of Jesus Christ who drove the money changers from the temple because they exploited the poor." Letters written to the magazine made it apparent that Jews, athiests, agnostics and even a few Christians were opposed to the mention of Christ. The priest insisted that the oath remain unchanged. Furthermore, Coughlin feared that outsiders might sneak in and disrupt the meetings. He therefore recommended that a sergeant-at-arms be appointed to check membership credentials before admitting people to the meeting. To assure his continued control of the Union, Coughlin gave the order that chapters could be addressed only by fellow members of the National Union who were sanctioned by the state officers. Finally, all mass meetings of any nature were banned because he feared that the membership might be swayed,"if some silver tongued politician were allowed to speak at a mass meeting of its members";[9] a rather ironic statement considering its source.

On April 20, the National Union filed its first financial report. It explains how Coughlin financed his organization. The report disclosed that the Union had raised $101,060 in the two month period commencing approximately February 20. The major portion of that sum,[10] however, had been borrowed from the Radio League of the Little Flower.

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[9] Ibid., April 3, 1936.

[10] $76,692.

In addition, Coughlin's parish had loaned the fledgling $2,000. Thus, only $22,368 represented actual contributions. Of this amount only $925 consisted of donations of one hundred dollars or more.[11] The report would seem to substantiate the theory that the priest possessed no large financial backing and actually relied upon the nickles, dimes, and dollars contributed by the poor.

The revised National Union sought to achieve the status of a potent political force using its influence to affect congressional elections. In January, 1936, Coughlin estimated that chapters had been established in 302 of the nation's 435 congressional districts. He interpreted this as a clear warning to all congressmen that his "lobby of the people" was a force to be reckoned with.[12]

Throughout the early months of 1936, Coughlin worked to solidify his organization. He promulgated the criteria used to judge whether candidates could be endorsed. Political affiliation was not a relevant factor. However, he did stipulate that no member of the Union itself would receive its endorsement. To be considered eligible, the candidate had to publish, at least three times, his pledge to support the principles of social justice. The final authorization of all endorsements was reserved by the central office, which was Coughlin.[13]

Coughlin envisioned the role of the National Union as a civic minded, para-political force which would compel the selection of good candidates from both major parties by ignoring established labels

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[11] New York Times, April 21, 1936.

[12] Ibid., January 6, 1936.

[13] Social Justice., March 20, 1936.

and supporting men on their individual merits. He contended that, "the stupidity of voting for a person because he waves the Republican black banner of reaction or because he flaunts the pink pennant of New Deal Democracy is outmoded." In addition, he counseled the membership to retain their regular political affiliation because it was essential to participation in the primaries.[14] Coughlin prepared to test his influence with the electorate. The National Union for Social Justice was reformed and ready for action in the 1936 primaries.

Before analyzing the National Union's influence upon the primary campaigns of 1936, it is necessary to examine Coughlin's actions on the national scene. Simultaneously with his reconstruction of the Union, he began an ill-fated attempt to force the passage of the third Frazier-Lemke Farm Mortgage Bill. The results of this crusade have a direct bearing on the formation of the Union Party.

The Frazier-Lemke Bill was jointly sponsored by Senator Lynn Frazier and Representative William Lemke, both of North Dakota. It called for the Federal Government, acting through the Farm Credit Administration and the Federal Reserve System, to purchase all farm mortgages and permit the holders to gradually liquidate them at 1.5 per cent interest. The purchases were to be financed by the floatation of a special bond issue. The Federal Reserve Board would be obligated to purchase all bonds not claimed by private investors and to deliver Federal Reserve notes equal to the value of the bonds, but not to exceed three billion dollars.[15] In essence, this was interpreted as

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[14] Ibid., April 17, 1936.

[15] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 554.

promising a three billion dollar issue of greenbacks to put the government in the farm mortgage business on a mammouth scale.

Coughlin vigorously defended the unorthodox financial measures of the Frazier-Lemke Bill. In keeping with his monetary theories, he maintained that the bond issue would be backed by the "real wealth" of the nation—its fields, crops, farm buildings, and implements. This again emphasized his feeling that money was not real wealth but merely a "means of exchange".

The priest had ample support for his stand on the bill. The legislatures of thirty-three states had adopted resolutions advocating its passage and a sizeable number of congressmen, mirroring their constituencies, lent their support to the measure.[16] Roosevelt, however, was opposed to the bill because of its inflationary tendencies.

The Democratic majority in the House of Representatives supported the President's stand and attempted to bottle up the bill in committee. Representative John O'Connor of New York, Chairman of the House Rules Committee, exerted every possible delaying technique to prevent the bill from reaching the floor of the House.[17]

Coughlin immediately reacted to this evasive strategy. First, he pressured the administration through his Washington lobbyist, Louis Ward, but Roosevelt refused to submit. Then, he attacked the President on his radio program. He demanded that Roosevelt either endorse the

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[16] Mason, op. cit., p. 59.

[17] Tull, op. cit., p. 108.

bill or take responsibility for its death in committee. The priest further claimed that the President had pledged himself to the principles contained in the Frazier-Lemke Bill in a 1932 campaign speech delivered in Sioux City, Iowa. He accused Roosevelt of betraying the farmers' trust and emotionally announced that, "Not once had you intervened for the bill which you promised to sustain . . . Meanwhile, 32 million residents of farm states of America, defrauded of their hire, raised their voices to highest heaven for vengence which God will not deny." [18]

An interesting and amusing outcome of Coughlin's fight for the Frazier-Lemke Bill was his verbal battle with Representative O'Connor. The two Irish-Catholics vehemently denounced each other with the feud culminating in O'Connor's threat that:

> If you [Coughlin] will please come to Washington I shall guarantee to kick you all the way from the Capitol to the White House with clerical garb and all the silver in your pockets which you got from speculating in Wall Street while I was voting for all the farm bills. [19]

Although the priest accepted the challenge, Bishop Gallagher, his religious superior, counseled moderation and the priest canceled his trip to the Capitol. This is a portent of the priest's willingness to involve himself in the kind of personal invective that would play a major role in the election campaign of 1936.

Throughout March and April, Father Coughlin continued his crusade for the Frazier-Lemke Bill. The petition to release the bill from

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[18] New York Times, February 17, 1936.

[19] Ibid.

committee needed 218 signatures. Partially through the priest's efforts, the number of signers slowly increased. On April 30, it finally achieved the magic number and it was released with debate scheduled for May 11.[20] The stage was now set for the most important period in Coughlin's career.

The priest was now ready to test his power. The primary campaigns were about to start and a bill that he had marked as virtually indispensible was up for consideration. He was prepared to pull out all stops to show his influence and impress the Roosevelt administration. If he could achieve sufficiently spectacular results there would be no need to progress further with his opposition to the President. If, however, he failed to achieve his goals, further, more drastic action would become necessary. The period from mid-April until the end of May would be pivotal in determining his actions during the presidential campaign of 1936.

The first primary test for the reformed National Union came in Pennsylvania. The state primary elections were scheduled for April 28, The Union had only a week to organize for the campaign, yet it endorsed candidates in twenty-four of the state's thirty-four congressional districts. When the returns were counted, twelve endorsees had emerged victorious. This astonishing result, achieved without benefit of extensive campaigning or monetary outlay, greatly heartened Coughlin. Social Justice openly boasted of the success. The May 8 issue proclaimed, in bold headlines, that "Victories in Pennsylvania Spur National Union's Fighters in Ohio—Nominate Twelve Candidates—

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[20] Social Justice, May 15, 1936.

Unseat Two Congressmen." The paper further proclaimed that the defeated endorsees would run as independent candidates and with the Union backing were virtually assured of election.[21]

The actual significance of the Pennsylvania primary is open to question. Of Coughlin's twelve victors, ten were incumbents; this tends to lessen the significance of their achievement due to the intrinsic edge which the incumbent possesses. An important exception, however, was the victory of Michael J. Stark, incumbent Philadelphia Democrat, who had been repudiated by the party organization. With the aid of the National Union, he was renominated.[22] Although Coughlin's influence was felt in Pennsylvania, it is safe to conclude that he greatly overestimated his power—a flaw observable throughout his career.

The National Union was now ready for an all-out effort. Greatly encouraged by their Pennsylvania "victory", they prepared for the Ohio primary. The prognosis was promising; Coughlin claimed 250,000 followers in the state and the date of the election, May 12, gave ample time to organize a concerted effort. The priest used all the pressure-group tactics available to influence the Ohio electorate.

Social Justice became a propaganda sheet for the endorsed Ohio candidates. It gave them lead space and issued instructions to the National Union chapters on how best to promote their interests. Throughout the campaign, it optimistically predicted a smashing victory. Coughlin went to considerable expense to provide propaganda accoutrement

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[21] Ibid., May 8, 1936.

[22] Tull, op. cit., p. 118.

for his followers. Leaflets, badges and pins (bearing Coughlin's likeness) were distributed throughout the state.[23] Nothing was wanting in the attempt to influence voters.

Coughlin attached enough importance to the Ohio primary to personally campaign throughout the state. He spoke before an enthusiastic crowd of twenty thousand at Toledo on May 8. His regular Sunday broadcast of May 10, was delivered in Cleveland before a live audience of twenty-five thousand. This speech was also carried over the radio network and, to insure blanket coverage of Ohio, Coughlin's normal outlets, WGAR, Cleveland, and WLW, Cincinnati, were supplemented by WBNX, Columbus, and WSPD, Toledo.[24]

The exhaustive efforts in Ohio paid handsome dividends. National Union candidates were nominated in thirteen of the eighteen congressional districts in which endorsements had been made. Social Justice jubilantly proclaimed an overwhelming victory. The headline read "Smashing Success in Ohio Primaries Added to National Union Victory Roll."[25] More importantly, the New York Times was also impressed. Its article stated that:

> Not only did the National Union for Social Justice score a triumph over incumbent lawmakers, but apparently fifteen of its thirty-two endorsees were nominated with the possibility of the sixteenth being added by the late returns. . . The strength of the National Union for Social Justice was one of the big surprises of the state-wide primary.[26]

It was obvious that Coughlin had achieved his goal. The article's

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[23] Dyson, op. cit., p. 36.

[24] New York Times, May 11, 1936.

[25] Social Justice, May 27, 1936.

[26] New York Times, May 14, 1936.

concluding sentence provides an excellent capsule summary of the priest's aim. "Politicians can look forward to a fall campaign. . . complicated by a new and important factor of a sort they have not had to contend with for years." [27]

Certain trends within the victory, which the Coughlin forces overlooked, however, pointed in a different direction. Of the Union's fifteen victorious candidates, only three were Republicans. Of the seventeen defeated, eleven were Republicans.[28] It would appear that being a Democrat was almost as important as being endorsed by the National Union. Later, when the voters were forced to chose between the two, the Democratic label proved eminently more valuable.

In the midst of his success, Coughlin suffered a serious setback. When the vote on the Frazier-Lemke Bill was taken, also on May 12, the measure went down to defeat by the substantial margin of 234-142. The opposition to the bill had centered its attention on the inflationary aspects. The turning point of the debate came when Speaker of the House, Joseph W. Byrns, read a letter from American Federation of Labor President, William Green, asserting labor's opposition to the measure as inflationary and requesting all friends of labor to oppose it.[29]

To Coughlin this was a bitter disappointment. He placed the blame directly upon the labor leader. He called Green an "honest" but

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Tull, op. cit., p. 119.

[29] New York Times, May 14, 1936.

"incapable" individual who had allowed himself to be used as a "tool of the money interests." He also threatened retribution in November against those who had opposed the measure.[30] In considering how to make good his threat, Coughlin confronted another momentous decision.

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[30] Social Justice, May 22, 1936.

V

What would be Coughlin's reaction to the defeat of the Frazier-Lemke Bill? He had gone all out for its passage, claiming that the fate of America's farmers hung in the balance. Following his primary victories, he was certain to undertake drastic action. Due to his failure to defeat Roosevelt on this issue, the future success of his social justice program depended upon it. Although Coughlin was to deny any intention of third party action, it remained in the wind.

Until the end of May, however, there was a distinct possibility that the priest might, in the 1936 campaign, transfer his allegiance to the Republican party. Early in the year, William E. Borah, liberal Republican senator from Idaho, was a leading contender for his party's nomination. His position on the issues of monopoly, agricultural reform, labor legislation, and old age relief were in harmony with the principles of social justice.[1] All that appeared necessary to bring the two men together was rapport on some concrete issue.

In the early months of 1936, Borah strengthened his position by sweeping to victory in the Wisconsin presidential primary and defeating Colonel Frank Knox, a definite dark horse, in the Illinois primary.[2] It appeared that he had taken the inside track. These victories, coupled with an apocryphal statement which appeared to coincide with Coughlin's view on the coinage of money prompted the priest to take action.

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[1] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 528.

[2] Ibid., p. 540.

In the April 17 issue of Social Justice, Coughlin published an open letter to the Senator. He requested a firm reaffirmation of the previous statement on coinage. The priest further praised Borah's stand on world affairs and his indictment of communism in Mexico. The letter concluded with the request that Borah answer it for publication as soon as was convenient.[3] The implication that endorsement would follow a favorable response was substantiated by continued complimentary references to the Senator in the April 24 and May 1 issues of the magazine.

Borah's answer arrived on May 22. His letter was a masterpiece of political non-commitment. He thanked the priest for his confidence, promised to continue the battle in Washington for honest reform legislation, and skirted the monetary issue by saying that he had not deeply considered the implications inherent in this interpretation of congressional coinage. He closed by telling Coughlin to continue his efforts on behalf of America's economically downtrodden.[4] Both the delay of the answer and the tone of the letter made it obvious that he desired no link with the National Union.

By the time the letter arrived, Borah had fallen from a position of serious contention. The front runner, Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas, was anathema to Coughlin. He called the Governor "dumb" and commented that if the Republicans nominated him they would be attempting to put the nation on "the booby standard."[5] Landon's

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[3] Social Justice, April 17, 1936.

[4] Ibid., May 22, 1936.

[5] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 555.

unanimous nomination at Cleveland in June ended any possibility that the priest would support the G.O.P. in 1936.

The third party issue now loomed larger than ever. In a Social Justice editorial entitled "The Last Straw" Coughlin made his first cryptic reference to third party action:

> With the defeat of the Frazier-Lemke bill the last straw has fallen upon our wearied backs. The last hope for financial reform under the New Deal has vanished.
>
> Approximately 150 members of Congress have been driven, politically and economically, into no man's land.
>
> Untold numbers of American citizens who believe in democracy and the high purpose of this nation have been driven with them . . . The 150 Congressmen and their millions of constituents will not remain bewildered in no man's land nor will they return in desperation to the New Deal which is nothing more than the Old Deal turned inside out.
>
> Take this determination for what it is worth.[6]

He continued this line of reasoning in his weekly letter in the same issue. He entitled the letter "Where do we go from here." "Within two or three weeks," he concluded, "I shall be able to disclose the first chapter of a plan, which if followed out, will discomfort the erstwhile sham battlers, both Republican and Democratic. We must go to victory from the primaries."[7] The formation of a third party was drawing rapidly closer.

The available material from which to construct a third party movement appeared more than adequate. Although Huey Long was dead,

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[6] Social Justice, May 29, 1936.

[7] Ibid.

his organization still existed under the titular guidance of the Reverend Gerald L.K. Smith. Both the Share-Our Wealth movement and the National Union for Social Justice were opposed to Roosevelt's re-election. Also, there remained the nebulous connections between the two organizations that had been formed before "the Kingfish" was assassinated. Furthermore, a third organization was rapidly approaching independent action. Doctor Francis E. Townsend's Old Age Pension clubs had never supported Roosevelt. The Reverend Smith had ingratiated himself with the Dcotor late in 1935 and, by May, 1936, virtually directed his thinking.[8] All of these organizations had as a primary goal monetary reform and wider distribution of income. Though they did not agree upon the exact details, their ideas were not incompatible. As early as May 22, Smith predicted that the followers of Coughlin, Townsend, and himself were about to "congeal under a leadership with guts."[9] Social Justice echoed Smith and pointed out the nearness of united action when it commented that:

> While the principles of the Townsend Plan are most beneficial it is our conviction that such reform cannot be expected to meet with any degree of success under our present economic conditions. The aims that the Townsend Clubs are striving to obtain are automatically included in the sixteen principles of the National Union for Social Justice.[10]

The issue had reached the critical period.

In the June 5, issue, Social Justice mirrored an important change in Coughlin's attitude toward Roosevelt. Since the break, late in 1935, he had advocated reform of the New Deal. Now he demanded its

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[8] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, pp. 552-53.

[9] Ibid., p. 555.

[10] Social Justice, May 29, 1936.

removal. In his regular editorial, Coughlin stated that, "The opposing lines are already drawn. The Roosevelt administration, on one hand, bent on Communistic revolution: on the other, a public opinion progressively enlightened, as never before, on matters of monetary finance." The priest continued that the President was attempting to establish a personal dictatorship in order to install regimentation with little interference. He inferred that removal was the only solution.[11] This was the opening note of Coughlin's 1936 campaign. It outlined the thesis which would recur countless times from June until November.

The third party issue was more clearly foreshadowed in the June 12 issue of Social Justice. Again in his editorial, the priest urged his audience to stand by for portentous developments. He told the readers that:

> The activities of the National Union will increase tremendously immediately following June 16 or 17. Approximately at that time I shall lay down a plan for action which will thrill you and inspire you beyond anything that I have ever said or accomplished in the past. Already the plan is completed. The statement is prepared. The element of time prevents my mentioning it at this moment.

Furthermore, he clearly hinted at the possibility of a new party when he requested his followers to maintain complete faith in his judgment for the next six months and patiently await the explanation of his subsequent conduct which would appear in Social Justice. He emphasized the possibility of independent action by emphatically promising that no congressman who had opposed the Frazier-Lemke bill

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[11] Ibid., June 5, 1936.

would be endorsed by the National Union.[12]

The inner history of the following week remains obscure. On the surface, Coughlin received another affirmation of his national influence. The Maine primary was held on June 16. Although the state was a bedrock of Republican conservatism, the National Union had diligently labored to secure the nomination of three candidates who had endorsed the social justice program. Only one of the three was actually victorious. Still, the New York Times gave the Union credit for the exceptionally heavy voter turnout in the state and expressed surprise at Coughlin's appeal within the Republican party.[13] Again, the priest was supported in his analysis of his own power. It is safe to surmise that it emboldened him to continue his course of action.

When interviewed about his Maine "victory", Coughlin admitted to a New York Times reporter that he considered a third party a virtual certainty, but denied that he would take an active part in its formation and absolutely refused to speculate concerning the identity of the possible candidate. He inferred, however, that further information would be released on the first of his special summer broadcast series scheduled for June 19.[14]

Coughlin never had the chance to make the initial announcement about the formation of the Union Party. On June 17, Gerald L.K. Smith disclosed that a coalition had been formed consisting of the National

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[12] Ibid., June 12, 1936.

[13] New York Times, June 17, 1936.

[14] Ibid.

Union for Social Justice, the Share-Our-Wealth movement, the Old Age Pension Clubs, and the supporters of Representative William Lemke of North Dakota. He stated that Lemke would serve as the presidential candidate.[15] What had been so long forecast finally appeared in an exceedingly, anti-climactic manner.

The first public reaction to the announcment came from Dr. Townsend. He immediately denied having made any commitments, but indicated he would be willing to consider such a coalition if the occasion presented itself. What thoughts Coughlin held concerning the premature disclosure remain unknown, for the priest kept his own counsel. He doggedly maintained his schedule refusing to release any comment prior to June 19. Lemke announced his candidacy on the nineteenth, just prior to the priest's broadcast, and thus substantiated Smith's disclosure.[16]

Coughlin's broadcast stated that Lemke was "eligible for endorsation [sic]"as a presidential candidate by the National Union. He devoted the major portion of the broadcast to castigating the established parties. His denouncement of Roosevelt and the New Deal achieved a high point of emotional eloquence:

> At last, when the most brilliant minds among the industrialists, bankers and their kept politicians had failed to solve these questions on the principles upon which the Old Deal had operated, there appeared upon the scene of our national life a new champion of the people, Franklin D. Roosevelt. He spoke golden words of hope to the people. Never since the days of the gentle Master and His Sermon

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[15] Ibid., June 18, 1936.

[16] Ibid., June 19, 1936.

> on the Mount were such humanitarian principles enunciated . . . The thrill that was mine was yours. Through the dim clouds of the depression this man, Roosevelt, was, as it were, a new savior of his people . . . It is not pleasant for me who coined the phrase "Roosevelt or ruin"—a phrase based upon promises—to voice such passionate words. But I am constrained to admit that "Roosevelt and ruin" is the order of the day because the money changers have not been driven from the temple. [17]

The Republican party received an equal, if not as eloquent, castigation:

> Alas! These Punch and Judy Republicans, whose actions and words were dominated by the ventriloquists of Wall Street, are so blind that they do not recognize, even in this perilous hour, that their gold basis and their private coinage of money have bred more radicals than did Karl Marx or Lenin. To their system of ox cart financialism we must never return. [18]

Coughlin chose his title for the party from Lincoln's "Union Party." The analogy which he draws is somewhat forced to say the least. "In 1864 when Lincoln proposed to abolish physical slavery there was established a 'union party'! In 1936, when we are determined to annihilate financial slavery, we welcome the 'union party' because it has the courage to go to the root of our troubles."

The priest further announced that Lemke's candidacy would be complemented by that of Thomas Charles O'Brien of Boston, Massachusetts, former district attorney for that city and counsel for the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, running for the vice-presidency. [19] Theoretically, the Union Party possessed an unbeatable ticket: Lemke was a Westerner, a Protestant, a Republican, and a representative of the

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[17] *Social Justice*, June 22, 1936.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

farm interest; O'Brien was an Easterner, a Catholic, a Democrat, and a representatives of the interests of labor.

Coughlin placed his career on the line in supporting the formation of a third party. Never in American history had one succeeded in establishing itself as a replacement for a vigorous major party. The internal inconsistencies of the Union Party further jeopardized its chances of success. Finally, its late start and lack of functioning organization could prove to be nothing but an impediment.

Coughlin, however, had little choice. He was thoroughly convinced that his program of "social justice" was the only solution to the depression. He had attempted to convince Roosevelt and had been rebuked. His plan to by-pass the Chief Executive and obtain control of Congress through para-political pressure, while initially successful, would have required too much time if it had been continued. Also, his endeavor to force the President to recognize his influence had been defeated with the Frazier-Lemke bill. Coughlin now had only one alternative—to match his own charismatic attraction against that of Roosevelt.

There were certain factors which made it appear that victory might not be too hopeless. If the "union" could marshal the latent membership which its three component units claimed it would be formidable. The national distribution of the membership was also pivotal. With the National Union claiming its strongest adherants in the Mid-west and on the Eastern coast, the Share-Our-Wealth

movement entrenched in the South and the Old Age Pensioners based in the Far West, the party was theoretically capable of controlling the essential states. Finally, Coughlin's success in the various primaries made it appear that victory could be won with hard work. At the start of the campaign, then, the priest had slight, although apparently sound, reason for hope.

The campaign and the candidates were, however, to undermine these hopes. Certain basic errors in strategy coupled with a lack of understanding of the American political system doomed the party from the very outset. The enormity of the defeat, when it came, affected Coughlin profoundly. The period from June 19 to November 4 was pivotal in determining his actions in subsequent years. To comprehend this effect, a thorough analysis of the Union Party campaign of 1936 is necessary.

VI

Before analyzing the Union Party campaign, it is necessary to investigate further the background of its candidates. Such an investigation will aid in explaining the organization and direction of the new party. Furthermore, a close analysis of Lemke and O'Brien will clarify their relationship to Coughlin.. His choice of Lemke was not an illogical one. The North Dakotan had a good education that included study at the University of North Dakota, Georgetown University, and Yale Law School. After he received his law degree,he entered state politics. His sympathy with agrarian discontent brought him to the attention of Arthur Townley, the organizer of the Non-Partisan League, who hired him as an attorney for this new agrarian movement which became a controversial part of North Dakota politics in 1915. He proved to have the qualities needed to assist in directing the new organization and soon become one of its leaders. [1]

As a young lawyer, Lemke had registered Republican, but he evidenced little party loyalty. He operated under the party banner solely because the Non-Partisan League dominated the G.O.P. in North Dakota.[2] In fact, during the 1920's he worked most often outside the two major parties, believing that neither offered the policies or the leadership which would relieve the depressed conditions

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[1] Edward C. Blackorby, "Willaim Lemke: Agrarian Radical and Union Party Presidential Candidate," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review XLIX (June, 1962), pp. 67-8.

[2] Tull, op. cit., p. 127.

of the farmer.[3] Twice, Lemke resorted to organized third party action. In 1922, he filed as a candidate for governor to aid in the election to the United States Senate of his close friend and political confidant, Lynn Frazier and in 1925 he opposed Gerald P. Nye's bid for re-election to the Senate. Although neither attempt was successful, these experiences did not damage Lemke's career and left him more amenable to third party action in the future.[4]

With the onset of the depression, Lemke again became active in politics. The desperate conditions of the Western farmers prompted him to campaign for the House of Representatives in 1932. He promulgated a two-part program to change the bankruptcy laws as they applied to farmers and to re-finance farm mortgage indebtedness. By the first measure, farmers compelled to go through bankruptcy could remain on their farms, scale down their debts, and repay the balance in relatively small amounts. The second measure would permit the farmer to re-finance his debts by borrowing from the Federal government and to increase the amound of money in circulation by the issuance of Federal Reserve notes for this purpose.[5] The program later became famous as the Frazier-Lemke Bill.

Lemke's ideas gained wide support among farmer organizations and the Republican machine within North Dakota. This new-found support made him a critical figure in the eyes of the state Democratic party. Franklin Roosevelt faced his first major test in the North

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[3]Blackorby, op. cit., p. 69.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., pp. 70-71.

Dakota presidential primary and his advisers thought it wise to enlist Lemke's support if possible. Fred McLean, manager of Roosevelt's campaign in the state, arranged an interview between the two men at Hyde Park. Although Roosevelt made no actual commitments, Lemke, acting on the general assurances he received, returned to North Dakota and informed the Non-Partisan League and the Farmers' Union that Roosevelt would support the bankruptcy and farm re-financing measures. His assurances were instrumental in Roosevelt's victory in North Dakota.[6]

Victorious in his own campaign, Lemke went to Washington in 1933 secure in the feeling that he would be instrumental in the preparation of the Administration farm program. He soon found out, however, that farm legislation would originate in an inner circle of presidential advisers and that successful enactment of his program would depend less upon his congressional influence than upon the hearings he could gain from presidential intimates. Unfortunately, they showed scant regard for his solution to the farm problem.[7]

When it became impossible to influence Roosevelt or his immediate agricultural advisers through personal pressure, Lemke sought other means. He delivered speeches over a nation-wide radio network sponsored by the Farmers' Union, he lobbied and cajoled other legislators, and sought support from other national groups, including Father Coughlin. His efforts were successful for in June, 1934, Congress passed his bankruptcy measure.[8]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 72.

[8] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 280.

North Dakota voters returned Lemke to the House in 1934 congressional elections. During the campaign, he promised to work for the passage of the second phase of his controversial program. He was, however, doomed to disappointment. Late in 1934, the Supreme Court declared the bankruptcy law unconstitutional, and Lemke was forced to devote most of 1935 to its revision. By May of 1936, he succeeded in bringing the farm mortgage refinancing bill to the floor of the House.[9] The failure of the bill has already been recounted. Lemke now faced a decision.

The immediate result of the defeat was to turn Lemke from "a mere critic and half-concealed opponent" of Roosevelt into an open and implacable enemy who was thoroughly convinced that the solution to the farmers' problems could not be attained within the framework of either major party. To Lemke, the enactment of his agricultural reforms meant more than any political allegiance. As his past career demonstrated, he was willing to become associated with any movement which promised success. Possible association with Father Coughlin appeared to be a most promising outlet.

Coughlin and Lemke had become acquainted in late 1932 when the Congressman wrote the priest commending him on his inflationary proposals and soliciting his support for the farm refinancing measure.[10] Coughlin considered this plan the obvious solution to the farmers' woes and agitated for its passage. The defeat of the Frazier-Lemke Bill stirred both men to action.

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[9] Ibid., p. 554.

[10] Blackorby, op. cit., p. 75.

In early June, 1936, Father Coughlin prepared for possible third party action, by naming forty-eight state chairmen for the National Union for Social Justice. He appointed Lemke in North Dakota. Furthermore, the priest financed a careful study of the election laws in each state. In a letter dated June 8, Coughlin informed his state chairman that "in due time telegrams will be sent you containing . . . the names of the candidates for president and vice-president." [11] All that the priest needed now was a candidate. He sought a Republican who was dissatisfied with the party standard bearer, Landon, politically secure in his home state, and thoroughly opposed to Roosevelt. Lemke admirably filled all requirements.

The North Dakotan was more than amenable to third party action. His past experiences with it, while not placing him in office, had brought success in the broader framework of translating his ideas into action. There is no evidence that he considered this situation any different. Furthermore, the funds and publicity channels which Coughlin possessed were very alluring. Here lay an opportunity for Lemke to reach the people, secure support for his policies, and to even the score with Roosevelt. As previously mentioned, Lemke declared his candidacy on June 19.

Both Coughlin and Lemke followed a strikingly similar path in their alienation from the New Deal. Both men made a contribution, albeit small, to Roosevelt's 1932 victory. Both had been led to believe that they would be consulted in the formation of policy and

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[11] Ibid.

both had seen their pet schemes rejected. Furthermore, they agreed upon financial, agricultural, and foreign policy matters. No other candidate was as admirably suited to Coughlin's Union Party as the one he chose.

While the presidential candidate was the best available, the man nominated for the vice-presidency was a woeful non-entity. Thomas Charles O'Brien was an obscure Massachusetts politician. After working his way through Harvard Law School as a railway baggage man, he was elected district attorney for Suffolk County. He also served as the regular counsel for the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen.[12] With nothing more to recommend him as a national personality, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he was chosen because he was an Irish Catholic from an important Eastern state.

The formation of the Union Party platform was one of the rare occasions when all the members of the coalition co-operated. Lemke, O'Brien, Coughlin, Francis P. Keelon, editor of the pro-Coughlin Brooklyn Tablet and Martin Sweeney, Coughlinite congressman from Cleveland, met at Great Barrington, Massachusetts on June 21. On the 23, Dr. Townsend, Gerald L.K.Smith and Lemke held a conference. Finally, Lemke and O'Brien went to Royal Oak to confer further with the priest. The platform was published in the July 6 issue of Social Justice.[13]

The Union Party Platform[14] was extremely vague and generalized.

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[12] Tull, op. cit., p. 128.

[13] Blackorby, op. cit., p. 76, New York Times, June 24, 1936, Social Justice, July 6, 1936.

[14] See Appendix II

Its fifteen planks represent nothing more than a condensation of Coughlin's Sixteen Principles of Social Justice. The currency question dominated it. Planks two and three advanced plans to enact Coughlin's monetary theories. Lemke's agricultural program received full and explicit endorsement in plank five. The other members of the Union did not, however, fare as well. Instead of endorsing the Townsend Plan, the platform simply requested in the sixth plank "reasonable and decent security for the aged." The Share-Our-Wealth movement was indirectly considered in plank fourteen which recommended "a limitation upon the net income of any one individual in any one year." Aside from Coughlin's monetary provisions, it gave no explanation concerning the implementation of these goals. Finally, the platform expressed avowedly isolationistic sentiments with plank one announcing that America must be "self-contained and self-sustained." The platform as a whole shows close connection with Populism. Many of its planks were similar to those of the Populist platforms of the 1890's.[15]

With candidates, a platform, and a goal, the Union Party now needed only support. Two groups which were vital to success—the other independent political organizations and the national press—proved almost wholly opposed. Other political movements wasted little time in making their feelings known. Thomas Amlie, House leader of the Wisconsin Progressives, stated that the Coughlin United Front could accomplish little without the support of labor, whose absence was noticeably apparent in the Union Party. Paul Kvale, Farmer-

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[15]Mason, op. cit., p. 131.

Labor party representative from Minnesota, called the movement "ill-timed" and its organization "impracticable." Delegates to the convention of the Farm Holiday Association fought the issue of endorsing Lemke to a stalemate. Finally, four state presidents, who were loyal to the North Dakotan, seceded to form a "real farmers' organization." They were led by Representative Usher L. Burdick of North Dakota who was Lemke's campaign manager. Earl Browder, American Communist party leader, charged that "the self-styled 'Union Party' secretly manufactured in the laboratory of Coughlin and Lemke and sprung upon the world full-grown, bears all the earmarks of a Hearst-Landon-Liberty League intrigue." Finally, Norman Thomas, perennial Socialist party presidential candidate, commented that "Two and a half rival messiahs plus one ambitious politician plus a platform which reminds me of the early efforts of Hitler to be radical do not make a very strong party . . . " [16] The organization could hope for little assistance from that sector.

Newspaper and periodical comment on the new party was universally critical; not a single major paper supported Lemke. The New York Herald Tribune called the party a "serious menace" to the administration and predicted that it would cost the Democrats more than the Republicans. The Philadelphia Bulletin conceded that the party might play a prominent role but maintained that Coughlin overshadowed Lemke. The New Republic was not opposed to the party platform but doubted whether Coughlin and his associates would be able to implement it

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[16] Donald R. McCoy, Angry Voices: Left of Center Politics in the New Deal Era (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958), pp. 141, 145-46.

without recourse to f'ascism. The Nation, correctly recognizing Roosevelt's popularity as the major issue in the campaign, stated that Lemke's candidacy would hurt Landon more than Roosevelt. It saw that some anti-Roosevelt voters would now go to the North Dakota congressman rather than the Kansas governor.[17] Whatever favorable campaign coverage the Union Party received, it would have to come from its own outlets for the national press made it obvious that it was firmly opposed to Lemke and Company.

Lemke attempted to organize the party into a functioning unit. He chose Burdick as campaign manager and John Nystul, former Non-Partisan League leader, as national chairman. They chose Chicago as the site of the national headquarters; unfortunately it was unable to begin operation until September. The party staff was comprised largely of Lemke followers from North Dakota. They immediately sought to place the Union ticket on the ballot in as many states as possible.

This proved to be an exceedingly difficult problem. Attorneys, provided by Coughlin, assisted party organizers with complete legal advice gained from the priest's study of state election laws.[18] The intricacies of these laws, however, made their task difficult. In some states, the title "Union Party" was pre-empted by foresighted Democrats while in others the petitions which the party filed were carefully inspected by the established office-holders hoping to find enough incorrect signatures to invalidate them. Also, because of its late formation,

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[17]Tull, op. cit., pp. 131-32.

[18]Blackorby, op. cit., p. 78.

it could not get on the ballot in several states. Coughlin finally succeeded in getting the party on the ballot in thirty-six states. In only thirty of them, however, could he use the name Union Party. In Michigan it had to appear as the "Third Party," in Pennsylvania as the "Royal Oak Party", in Illinois as the "Union Progressive Party", in New Jersey as the "National Union for Social Justice Party", in Oregon as the "Independent Union Party" and in South Dakota as the "Independent Party". [19] By far, the most serious outcome of this problem was the inability of the party to appear on the ballot in the pivotal states of New York, California, and Louisiana.

The campaign proved to be a strenuous one. Lemke traveled some thrity thousand miles by air. The general theme of his campaign was an attack upon "concentrated wealth that had impoverished the masses." [20] He repeated it at meetings of farm groups and at state fairs throughout the Midwestern agricultural region. He mounted a continuing attack against the New Deal and denounced the Agricultural Adjustment Administration as "a national lunacy" and Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace as the "greatest vandal in history." Although this approach left some of his audiences unreceptive, he maintained it throughout the campaign. He professed to believe that the Union Party would be the pivotal factor in the election and further announced that he was an optimist who subscribed to James Russell Lowell's theory that "truth was on the scaffold and wrong upon the throne," but that "an enlightened public opinion" would

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[19] See Appendix III.

[20] Blackorby, op. cit., p. 78.

produce victory for "decency and righteousness." [21]

In mid-October, Lemke began a Western tour which was supposed to end in California. The depleted nature of party finances is shown by his request that the national headquarters instigate a radio campaign for one dollar contributions to finance the project. The request met with meager success. By the end of the campaign, Lemke had spent $7,000 of his own funds, much of which had been borrowed.[22]

Following his return from the West, Lemke concentrated his efforts on the Midwestern agricultural areas. He stepped up his attacks on administration farm policy and continued advocating his own refinancing and farm-mortgage formula. There was little restraint in his criticism. He alleged that the Administration was "continuing this insane policy in the midst of hunger, misery, want and rags. . . There is overproduction of just one thing, and that is an overproduction of ignorance." [23] Throughout this agricultural heartland, he promised to put an end to eviction for debt.

Lemke had played it safe and filed for re-election to the House from his North Dakota district. As November 4 drew near, it became increasingly obvious that only a miracle could produce a Union Party victory. He returned to North Dakota to assure his congressional re-election. By this time, he had changed his tack, predicting that the election would be so close that it would be decided by the House of Representatives. He told his constituents that he wanted "to be there

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 79.

[23] New York Times, October 28, 1936.

to help elect myself president" and also urged them to support the state's other Representative, Usher Burdick. He commented, "When this election is thrown into the House I also want him there to help elect the Union Party candidates." [24] By election day, Lemke was as assured of re-election in North Dakota as he was of defeat in the presidential election.

Lemke had waged a campaign typical of a candidate attempting to unseat an incumbent. He had limited his major appearances to agricultural areas where his support was most likely to be concentrated. Although he had castigated the Administration and its farm policy, he did not allow personalities to enter the picture and he provided alternate proposals for those policies he criticized. His mentor, Father Coughlin, however, waged a much less rational campaign.

The priest undertook the campaign with all the fervor of a religious crusade. He held rallies in every major city of the East and Midwest. His controlling hand was ever evident in the Social Justice articles, and, early in September, he returned to the air for weekly broadcasts. The campaign for control of Congress was forgotten; Coughlin's single aim became the defeat of Roosevelt.

The priest officially opened his campaign on July 4 with a rally in Brockton, Massachusetts. He attacked the President for "out-Hoovering Hoover" by burdening the nation with a $35,000,000,000 public debt. [25] Coughlin followed this speech with a whirlwind tour

[24] Blackorby, op. cit., p. 79.

[25] New York Times, July 5, 1936.

of the East. He conferred with National Union for Social Justice officials in Trenton, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and then returned to the Midwest for a meeting in Chicago. At all of these gatherings, he scored the administration and urged his followers to redouble their efforts on behalf of Lemke.[26]

One of the priest's early triumphs came at the national convention of the Townsendites. The Doctor's followers met in Cleveland from July 16 to July 20. The movement's leadership was bitterly divided over the question of endorsing Lemke. Coughlin endeavored to influence the membership with a virulent harangue against the President. Appearing at his oratorical best, he held the audience spellbound. He reminded the delegates that their beloved Doctor had already endorsed Lemke and assured them they would not be forced to surrender their identity if they supported the Union candidate. At the climax of his oration, Coughlin commanded all those who supported Lemke to rise. The entire audience complied. Overcome by his own spellbinding oratory, the priest tore off his coat and Roman collar then hysterically denounced Roosevelt as "the great betrayer and liar" for not having fulfilled his promise to reform the monetary system. He continued by shouting that the initials F.D.R. should stand for "Franklin Double-crossing Roosevelt." [27] Although he later apologized that he had become "carried away by the heat of the moment", he had seriously hampered his chances of success.

Despite his oratorical triumph, Coughlin did not achieve his main

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[26] Ibid., July 7-11, 1936.

[27] Ibid., July 17, 1936.

aim. The convention never formally endorsed Lemke as its presidential candidate. Doctor Townsend, however, continued to campaign for him until the election.

The "liar" speech also elicited a response from the Democratic Party which had been strangely silent up to that time. Democratic national chairman, James Farley, expressed the opinion that the priest had injured himself more than anyone else by his violent attack on the President, and he wrote off the Union Party as an insignificant issue in the campaign.[28] Furthermore, Roosevelt, in a private letter to vice-president Garner, written at approximately the same time, commented that "curiously enough, I don't think the Lemke ticket will cut into our vote any more than it will into the Republican vote."[29] Although neither knew it at the time, their predictions were to prove absolutely correct.

Oblivious to the furor he had created, the priest continued his campaign with whistle stop speeches in the North and East-Central sections of the nation. On July 26, he spoke before 15,000 farmers at Harrison, North Dakota and advised them to repudiate their debts if Lemke were defeated. He neatly side-stepped a charge of fiscal irresponsibility when later questioned by stating that he had been incorrectly quoted due to a malfunctioning public address system. What he had actually said was that farmers would have no choice but repudiation unless aid were extended to them.[30]

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[29]Elliott Roosevelt (ed.), Franklin D. Roosevelt—His Personal Letters, 1928-1945, vol. 1 (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), p. 602.

[30]New York Times, July 27-28, 1936.

As the campaign progressed Coughlin's addresses grew increasingly vitriolic. He descended upon Massachusetts in the first week of August. On the first, he delivered an address at Worcester which indicted the Republican candidate. He called Landon a "menace" and predicted a revolution if the Kansas governor were elected. On the following day at New Bedford, he returned to form and again attacked the President. He labeled Roosevelt a communist and announced "as I was instrumental in removing Herbert Hoover from the White House, so help me God, I will be instrumental in taking a communist out of the chair once occupied by Washington." [31]

The high-point of the campaign for Coughlin was the National Union for Social Justice convention held in Cleveland from the 13 to the 16 of August. The National Union chapters sent 10,000 official delegates to represent a membership estimated at 6,000,000. The atmosphere resembled that of a religious revival more than a political gathering. Coughlin was unanimously elected Union president and Lemke was unanimously endorsed as presidential candidate. The priest prepared the agenda and arbitrarily decided who would be allowed to speak. It was obvious that Coughlin was their messiah and the delegates came prepared to humbly obey his desires.

The only discordant note at the convention was grand marshal Walter P. Davis' proclamation that Doctor Townsend and Reverend Smith would be allowed to speak "over my dead body." The priest, demonstrating his power, quickly over-ruled him and both men were permitted to speak,

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[31] Ibid., August 3, 1936.

but, only after the convention had officially adjourned. Both received cordial receptions but said nothing of real significance. [32]

The climax of the gathering was an outdoor rally held at Cleveland's Municipal Stadium on Sunday afternoon. It was attended by a highly partisan crowd of 42,000. Coughlin delivered the main address in which he promised to continue his fight for monetary reform and deplored the lack of "Christian charity" in the operation of the government. Again carried away by the enthusiasm of his audience, he made what was perhaps the most rash promise of his career. He told his followers that "If I don't deliver 9,000,000 votes for William Lemke, I'm through with radio forever." [33] This promise proved very difficult to keep after November 4.

As almost an anti-climax, Lemke and O'Brien spoke following Coughlin. The North Dakotan exuded optimism, openly predicting victory for the Union Party, "We are going to win. The Union Party's bid for the presidency and the vice-presidency of the United States will not be a campaign of defeatism." O'Brien, endeavoring to maintain the image of a spokesman for labor, attacked A.F. of L. president Green for his opposition to the Frazier-Lemke bill and prophesied that the majority of the labor vote would reject Green's leadership and support the Union Party.[34] Thus ended what has been labeled "the emotional high-water mark of American political history." [35]

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[32] Tull, op. cit., p. 140.

[33] New York Times, August 18, 1936.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Commonweal, August 28, 1936 quoted in Tull, op. cit., p. 142.

Coughlin's campaign activities following the convention grew increasingly wilder and more illogical. At Providence, Rhode Island, he said that, if Hoover had been re-elected, "there would be more bullet holes in the White House than you could count with an adding machine." In Boston, he declared "Every international banker has communistic tendencies." In New York, he pronounced the choice between Roosevelt and Landon as one "between carbolic acid and rat poison." In Cincinati, he called the President "anti-God." In Des Moines, he categorized Roosevelt's advisers as "Hull, the internationalist and number one communist. Then comes Ma Perkins, Ickes, Morgenthau, Tugwell, Mordecai Ezekiel—all communists." Finally, in Cleveland, he indicted Roosevelt as a "scab president" leading a "scab army" (the W.P.A.).[36] Undoubtedly, this language worried and alienated many people. It cost the Union Party precious votes which it could ill afford to lose.

Coughlin held two major rallies following the National Union convention. At both of them he continued his attacks upon the Roosevelt administration to the cheers of his loyal adherents. On September 6, the priest held a mammouth outdoor meeting at Chicago's Riverview Park. It was attended by a crowd of over 80,000 who paid fifty cents admission for the benefit of the Union Party coffers. In his speech, Coughlin gave evidence of his powers of literary analogy when he compared the New Deal with a "slick" magazine:

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[36]Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 629, New York Times, October 27, 1936.

> Mr. Roosevelt is the beautiful cover on the New Deal magazine. But what do we find when we open it? The first article is by Henry Morgenthau, the lover of international bankers. The second article is by Rexie Tugwell, the communist and handshaker with Russia. The third article is by Mordecai Ezekiel, the modern Margaret Sanger of the pigs. The fourth article is by Henry "Plow Me Down" Wallace, . . . last but not least, we have "Three-Finger" Jim Farley. Postmaster General, chairman of the state committee, of the national committee— Three Fingers—one for each pie. [37]

The priest continued his attack at Brooklyn's Ebbetts Field on September 13. Here, 22,000 paid to hear him indict the "pagan industrial system of the United States." He scornfully denounced the entire gamut of New Deal labor legislation. Then, for a moment, he departed from his attack on the administration to accuse David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, of raising $5,000 for the communist-sponsored Loyalists in Spain, strongly implying that Dubinsky was a communist. [38]

During the last month of the campaign, Coughlin's speeches contained nothing new. He continued to concentrate his efforts on indicting the Roosevelt administration for failing to relieve the depression through monetary reform and for flirting with communism. His last three addresses, delivered in New York, Scranton, and Newark, followed the established pattern. In the first, he declared that "a vote for Roosevelt is a vote for 273,000 socialists and David Dubinsky and 78,000 communists who sent funds to Spain to massacre helpless nuns and priests." At Scranton, he referred to Roosevelt as

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[37] New York Times, September 7, 1936.

[38] Ibid., September 14, 1936.

"the upstart president" and the "reviver of the divine right theory," then pronounced the New Deal "more vicious than the Old Deal." Finally, appearing at Newark, Coughlin told the audience that there would be 20,000,000 unemployed if Roosevelt were re-elected.[39]

Along with its external problems, internal disharmony plagued the Union party throughout the campaign. Townsend and Smith never really devoted their full energy to the campaign and Coughlin did not want to share the spotlight with them. Although he had been permitted to speak at the Townsend convention, he was reluctant to allow his supposed partners the same courtesy at his. When he was questioned about a proposed national tour with his two "partners", the priest snapped "Why should they tag me around?" [40] When it became obvious that the Union ticket would not appear on the California ballot, Townsend advised his followers to vote for Landon. When Smith announced, on October 18, that he planned to found a new nationalist movement designed to "seize the government of the United States", Townsend immediately disavowed him by saying "I am against fascism; it is un-American and smacks of the dictator-like policies of the New Deal." [41] Lemke followed Townsend's lead but Coughlin remained silent. The final collapse of this preposterous coalition fulfilled a prophesy Roosevelt made to former Wilson adviser, Colonel House, eighteen months earlier. "When it comes to a show-down, these fellows

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[39] Ibid., October 30, November 1,2, 1936.

[40] Ibid., August 14, 1936.

[41] Ibid., October 19, 1936.

cannot all lie in the same bed and will fight among themselves with absolute certainty." [42]

Coughlin unfortunately allowed Social Justice to saddle Lemke with the campaign nickname "Liberty Bell Bill." Almost every major party representative who condescended to take notice of the Union Party candidate mentioned that the Liberty Bell was cracked and intimated that so, perhaps, was Lemke.[43] This error detracted from his already weak public image.

Coughlin's relationship with Lemke was by no means an ideal one. The priest waged essentially a negative campaign, attacking Roosevelt at every chance. His mention of the North Dakotan in his speeches often appeared as almost an afterthought. Social Justice showed where its loyalties lay by placing a much greater emphasis on the priest than on the candidate. Finally, Coughlin demonstrated that he was the real director of the party when he summarily replaced Lemke on a nation-wide radio broadcast on the eve of the election.[44]

Two external forces aided in the frustration of the Union Party. The Catholic Church opposed Coughlin's rantings, and labor's Non-Partisan League in conjunction with the Progressive National Committee campaigned to assure Roosevelt's re-election. Both forces were extremely influential in alienating large blocks of voters.

Throughout his controversial career, Coughlin had stirred up

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[42] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 630.

[43] McCoy, op. cit., p. 149.

[44] New York Times, November 4, 1936.

protest within the Church. Various eminent prelates had opposed his political broadcasts since his first attack upon Hoover. His immediate superviser, Bishop Gallagher of Detroit approved of his actions so he was not affected by their criticism. During the election campaign, his intemperate utterances elicited a mild rebuke from Gallagher and, more importantly, sufficiently vociferous and wide-spread censure from high Church figures to materially affect the average Catholic voter.

The "liar" speech delivered at the Townsend convention had forced Bishop Gallagher to discipline his stormy subordinate. On July 23, Coughlin released an apology to the President. It was primarily motivated by the Bishop's request that the offensive language be toned down. Gallagher assured reporters, however, that in the main ". . . he [Coughlin] is working along the right path and he has my support." [45] This was followed by a series of important clerical censures.

Following the apology, Coughlin continued to heap abuse upon the Roosevelt administration. In the first week of September, the Vatican newspaper Osservatore Romano rebuked the priest for his violent criticism. The paper said:

> An orator who inveighs against persons who represent the supreme social authorities with the evident danger of shaking the respect that the people owe to these authorities, sins against the elementary proprieties. The impropriety is greater as well as more evident when he who speaks is a priest. [46]

The New York Times, the following day, stated that "High Vatican circles" stressed that the rebuke was not intended as a blanket

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[45] Ibid., July 29, 1936.

[46] Osservatore Romano, September 2, 1936 quoted in Tull, op. cit., p. 143.

disapproval of Coughlin's activities. Actually, they said, Rome enthusiastically approved of his preaching the social encyclicals, but was disturbed that his attack upon Roosevelt might undermine respect for all authority and lead to a situation similar to the one existing in Spain. [47]

Both Coughlin and Gallagher emphatically denied that the Osservatore Romano article was the official opinion of the Vatican, Coughlin's subsequent speeches support their allegation that the rebuke was not an official censure. The actual relationship of the newspaper to the Pope is confusing. It is definitely not the official voice of the Church yet, it is generally regarded as reflecting Vatican policy on current issues. Most Americans, however, assume that the paper's articles are official pronouncements so the effect on Coughlin's voter appeal among Catholics was unfavorable.

The month of October proved especially frustrating for the Royal Oak orator. In a radio broadcast financed by the Democratic National Committee and delivered on the eighth, Monsignor John A. Ryan, generally regarded as the leading scholarly proponent of Catholic social dogma in the nation, attacked Coughlin. He denied all of the major charges which Coughlin had leveled at the administration during the campaign. He labeled Coughlin's accusation of communism against the President as "ugly, cowardly, and flagrant calumnies." He continued by saying "the charge of communism directed at President Roosevelt is the silliest, falsest, most cruel, and most

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[47] New York Times, September 3, 1936.

unjust accusation ever made against a president in all the years of American history." He also defended David Dubinsky, Sidney Hillman, Rexford Tugwell, and Felix Frankfurter, men Coughlin had accused of possessing communist leanings. He characterized the New Deal program as "mild installments of too long delayed social justice." He scored Coughlin's monetary theories as "90 per cent incorrect" and closed by advising workers to support Roosevelt as the best means to improve their lot. [48]

A week before this broadcast, Rome announced that Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, Papal Secretary of State (and later Pius XII) was going to undertake an extensive tour of the United States. In the communiqué no reason was advanced for his visit. The American press quickly jumped to the conclusion that he was coming to investigate the political activities of Father Coughlin. [49]

Pacelli arrived on October 8, and remained for three weeks. During his stay, he refused to answer any questions concerning Coughlin. Meanwhile, American papers continued to be filled with rumors concerning the impending crackdown on the priest. To date, the Vatican has never revealed the actual purpose of the Pacelli visit. Its timing, however, in the midst of the presidential campaign lends credulity to the theory that he came to observe Coughlin. Whatever the actual reason, his presence served to further alienate Catholic voters and weaken Coughlin's appeal.

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[48] Ibid., October 9, 1936.

[49] Ibid., October 2, 1936.

These events all weakened Coughlin's appeal among the Catholic voters. The activities of the national Progressive organizations helped to limit the support he received from the independent voters. Labor's Non-Partisan League, founded in April, 1936, by George L. Berry, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union and John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers sought to become "an instrumentality of the furtherance of liberalism in the United States." [50] The League pledged itself to co-operate with progressives to gain common goals. It was to be:

> A propaganda league which continued to adhere to Gompers' dictum "reward your friends, punish your enemies", but did it no longer through platonic words and nice pronouncements but through a well oiled and organized political machine. [51]

The organization sponsored political rallies, radio broadcasts, circular and pamphlet publications, and speakers bureaus. There is little doubt that this organization, by aiding in effectively marshaling the labor vote behind Roosevelt, contributed significantly to weakening whatever appeal the Union Party might have held for the working man.

Another important organization which opposed Lemke was the Progressive National Committee. This group was formed in Chicago in September, 1935. Its avowed purpose was to deliver the nation's independent vote to Roosevelt in 1936. A partial list of the committee's membership indicates its diversified appeal: Representative

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[50] McCoy, op. cit., p. 152.

[51] Ibid., p. 153.

Thomas Amlie, Farmer-Labor Governor Elmer Benson of Minnesota, Senators Hugo Black and Edward Costigan, Sidney Hillman, Wisconsin Progressives Robert and Phillip LaFollette, New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, John L. Lewis, and Washington Progressive Lewis Schwellenbach.[52]

The organization proclaimed its solid support of the President's campaign, and issued a statement which read in part:

> Political realignment cannot be made to order. Reactionaries . . . hope to win by dividing progressives. An unbiased examination of the field makes it unmistakably clear that the next president. . . will be Roosevelt or Landon. In this campaign there is therefore only one choice for American Progressives.[53]

The committee co-operated closely with Labor's Non-Partisan League in sponsoring radio programs, holding rallies and distributing literature. Their efforts were rewarded in November when the independent bote was cast almost totally for Roosevelt.

The combined force of internal inconsistencies, gross political blunders, organized and efficient opposition and inopportune timing proved too powerful for the Union Party to overcome. By early fall, there was little doubt left concerning the outcome of the election. The vote cast on November 4, was one of the most lopsided ever recorded in American history. Roosevelt garnered over 60 per cent of the popular vote, while in the electoral college he carried all the states save Maine and Vermont, thus fulfilling Jim Farley's prediction.

For the Union Party, the election was a catastrophe. It received

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[52] Ibid., p. 154.

[53] Ibid., pp. 154-55.

a mere 882,479 votes, only about 2 per cent of the total cast. A New York Times reporter recorded the priest's reaction. "On election night when the returns began coming in Coughlin sat in his Royal Oak office stunned, tears streaming down his cheeks. It was beyond comprehension." [54] Furthermore, the party elected no congressional candidates as Unionists per se; it had been thoroughly rebuked. What Coughlin had launched to repudiate Roosevelt backfired; he helped unite the labor and independent vote behine the President and the defeat served notice that the American people desired no part of the things for which the "unholy trinity" stood.

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[54] New York Times, November 8, 1936.

VII

Coughlin and Lemke tried to lay the foundation of a strong third party organization in 1936. They probably did not expect to win, but they did hope to make a respectable showing. Why they utterly failed to achieve their goal, a large enough following to insure the Union Party a major role in the 1940 campaign, has been suggested, but other factors should be weighed too.

The causes of the defeat can be grouped into four general categories. The major reason was Coughlin's failure to comprehend the primary issue of the campaign. It was the tremendous personal popularity of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The priest greatly aided the President by his illogical and intemperate attacks. Crowds came to listen and oftentimes cheer but on election day, they overwhelmingly endorsed Roosevelt.

The internal weaknesses of the party contributed in large measure to its defeat. The Union "trinity" had never been a close-knit group and before the campaign ended it was split asunder. Also, their presidential candidate did not possess the urbanity and polish that Americans have come to expect in their presidents. Lemke has been described as "A skinny little guy with a puckering squint of a smile, and a casting director would type him for a hick." [1] His studied "hayseed" appearance might have aided him with the Western agriculturalists but nationally it weakened his appeal. The religious inconsis-

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[1] Westbrook Pegler in the San Francisco Call Bulletin, August 9, 1948 quoted in Blackorby, op. cit., p. 73.

tencies within the party alienated many people. Fundamentalists, especially in the Midwest, cast a jaundiced eye upon the influence of a Catholic priest and Eastern Catholics disliked Coughlin's association with a Fundamentalist clergyman and Ku Klux Klan advocate. Money and political patronage issues also weakened the party. It possessed no local or state organization and the national one was rudimentary at best. The party, therefore, could not hope to attract a following with promises of post-election patronage. Furthermore, the exhaustive campaigning which is an integral part of a national election is expensive. The Union party simply could not match the two major parties in the campaign "war chest."

The external factors contributing to the defeat were as important as the internal ones. A most serious limitation was the inability of the party ticket to appear on the ballot of such pivotal states as California, Louisiana and New York. The first, home of the Townsend movement, cost them heavily. The second, base of the Share-Our-Wealth program, had been their main hope for a strong Southern showing. New York had demonstrated several times that Coughlin possessed a large, loyal following there. Had these states been able to voice their opinions, political experts feel that the Union party vote might have approached 3,000,000. The national press helped to weaken the popular appeal of the party. It was solidly opposed to the Union and emphasized the unfavorable side of Lemke's background while constantly endeavoring to undermine Coughlin's popularity. In fact, not a single major publication took a favorable view of the third party.

Finally, the external factor which most injured the party was its lack of co-operation with other dissident groups. The liberal, progressive farmer and labor organizations recognized that the surest way to obtain their goals was by supporting the New Deal. The Progressive National Committee and labor's Non-Partisan League went so far as to endorse Roosevelt and campaign actively for his re-election. Without the support of the independent vote, Coughlin's hope for success never materialized.

A final reason for the defeat is inherent in the American political tradition. Voters are not wont to "waste" their ballot on third party candidates. History records that they may theoretically approve of the party's program but when the votes are cast the major parties reap the benefit. It is safe to say that the Union Party never stood a chance in 1936.

It is now necessary to analyze the sources of Coughlin's support. Two major studies have been conducted which shed partial light upon the subject. Samuel Lubell in his Future of American Politics points out that outside his home state of North Dakota, Lemke received more than 10 per cent of the vote in only thirty-nine counties. He continues, "Twenty-one of these counties are more than 50 per cent Catholic. In twenty-eight of these thirty-nine counties the predominent nationality element is German."[2] This helps to pinpoint the areas in which religious and ethnic factors were concentrated enough to be of primary importance. Semour Martin Lipset, Professor of Sociology

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[2]Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co.,Inc., rev. ed., 1956), p. 152.

at the University of California, Berkley, in his essay "Three Decades of the Radical Right" analyzes the social basis of Coughlin's support. By analyzing three relevant public opinion polls, Professor Lipset arrived at the conclusions that older people were more inclined to support the priest, more men supported him than women, he attracted the less rather than the more educated and that "Coughlin's mass base came largely from the urban working class and the poor, particularly the unemployed and those on relief." [3] With these details in mind, it is safe to assume that the priest was more effective among those of his own religion and also those in the nation who were discontented with their lot, with the economic state of the country and with their prospects for the future. Appendix three lists by state what can be considered the hard core of Coughlin's following.

What effect did the defeat have upon the priest's subsequent career? Coughlin fulfilled his pledge of August 14, 1936, by departing from radio following the debacle. Had he actually ceased his public career at this point, he might easily have been remembered as an earnest and sincere, if somewhat misguided, phenomenon of the early depression. He soon returned, however, advocating a radical break with the American tradition. He had sincerely believed in democracy and the electoral process up to the election of 1936. The use of the National Union as a para-political pressure group in

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[3] Semour Martin Lipset, "Three Decades of the Radical Right", The Radical Right (ed.) Daniel Bell (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1964), pp. 381-91.

the state primaries gives evidence of this. In the election, he submitted his program, which he considered the only logical solution to the depression, to the electorate. It was overwhelmingly rejected. Yet, in the strength of his convictions, he still felt that it was correct. So, if his theories were correct and the electorate had rejected them, in his interpretation, the electorate must have been wrong. If the electorate could be wrong, then the democratic process must be invalid. Operating under this premise, Coughlin worked out a detailed plan for a corporate state in America.

This plan was announced on March 13, 1938. In his regularly scheduled broadcast, entitled "The Corporate State," Coughlin announced "that some reorganization of the government is necessary." He then indicted the existing system by saying:

> My friends, we have witnessed the deterioration of representative government which no longer represents the majority of our people but which contents itself with protecting the sanctity of debts and of bonds to the detriment of 95 per cent of our population.
>
> Under such debased conditions, democracy permitted us to vote against a party but always forced us to prolong the life of a system that was sapping our resources, our liberties and our lives.
>
> Therefore government has become so misrepresentative, under the fiction of democracy, that the dramatic hour has arrived to reorganize it so that it will be possible to enjoy the benediction of a real democracy. [4]

The priest then proposed a program of "eight specific proposals" which would "perfect" the governments of counties and of States as well as the Federal Government." By enumerating his program it will

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[4] Charles E. Coughlin, Sixteen Radio Lectures: 1938 Series (Detroit: Privately Published, 1938), pp. 93-94.

be possible to see how alienated Coughlin had become from the American political system.

> First, I propose that we abandon the inefficient system of parties. Instead of having the American voters divided artificially into Democrats and Republicans and "what-nots," I propose to have them divided naturally into groups according to vocations and professions.
>
> This proposal means that it will be necessary to change our entire system of electing members to the House of Representatives . . . for that system I would substitute the system of the corporate state election. This means that instead of being divided into congressional districts, citizens would be divided according to their classification in society. . . Each class of citizens grouped according to its present calling in life will have a representative in Congress whose business it will be really to represent that class . . . Each capitalist will be in his own class organized corporatively; each laborer in his class likewise will be organized in a corporation.
>
> Local units of each corporation will form State units; and State units will form national units, in which both the capitalists have their organizations and the laborers will have theirs. From these organizations they will freely select their own Representatives for Congress.
>
> My second proposal is related to the presidency of the United States. . . I propose that we abandon the electoral college and transfer the power of electing the President of the United States to the House of Representatives which House will be composed . . . of members elected according to class with each class having its own Representative.
>
> Instead of creating a dictatorial President, the House of Representatives will choose a President who is its leader. He will be chosen either from among their own members or from outside their members, as they decide.
>
> Thirdly, I propose that we retain the Senate of the United States with two Senators elected from each State, one of whom must represent capital and the other labor, in the wide acceptance of these terms. In one sense, the Senate will be vested with powers superior to those of the House of Representatives. I propose that while the Senate will not be permitted to initiate legislation,

nevertheless, it will be necessary for that body to sanction all legislation. The Senate will be presided over by the Vice-President who will also be Secretary of Corporations—that is, under the President and the House of Representatives, the Secretary of Corporations will be the supreme authority over every class corporation of the United States including all the corporations of every classification of labor, of agriculture and of capital.

Fourthly, I propose that Congress will abandon the present Federal System of taxation which has grown burdensome and confiscatory, and will substitute for it a system which will levy taxation according to income and not according to property.

Fifthly, I propose that Congress will declare a ten year moratorium on all Federal bond payments and interest payments, thereby enabling industry and commerce, labor and agriculture to husband their resources and profits in this battle not only against depression but against the bulwarks of civilization itself.

Sixthly, I propose that Congress and Congress alone shall have full control over the spending power of the Federal Government and forthwith will exercise its right to issue and regulate money for the nation.

Seventhly, I propose that it shall be the business of Congress to safeguard the functioning of the law of supply and demand. . . so that no child will be hungry or naked, no father will be needlessly unemployed and no wage-earner will be paid less than a living annual wage.

And lastly, I propose that Congress, composed of both the House and the Senate, will be a silent partner in settling, with a finality, all questions arising between capital and labor which capital and labor, through their corporations, do not settle by themselves.[5]

Coughlin concluded by stating that "This is a brief outline of the democratic Corporate State free from the domination of capitalism and party-ism; free from bigotry and racial hatreds." He rejoiced that his scheme would mean "no more antagonism of class against class";

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[5] Ibid., pp. 95-99.

and that it would mark "the end of plutocracy as well as the swan song of inefficient political party-ism." His final statement possesses a threatening ring. "If these proposals are in conflict with so-called States' rights, then the hour has arrived for us to declare ourselves for human rights in preference to States' rights."[6]

This strange conglomeration of Italian Fascism as envisioned by Mussolini and social justice as promulgated by Pius XI in Quadragesimo Anno is filled with internal inconsistencies. That it could be implemented under the existing constitution, as Coughlin announced, is highly unlikely. That it would end class conflict is also open to question; placing the capitalists and the laborers at logger heads in a legislative assembly would be as apt to increase conflict as remove it. Furthermore, calling a corporate state democratic is a contradiction in terms; where one exists there is little chance of the other. It is obvious that by 1938 the priest had thoroughly broken with the democratic-capitalistic system.

Coughlin did not limit himself to theory. By the beginning of World War II, he had spoken at a rally of the German-American Bund and seemed to be the patron of a national crypto-fascist organization, the Christian Front. He embraced another tenet of fascism when he began a campaign of anti-Semitism. Social Justice published the discredited "Protocols of the Elders of Zion"[7] and his broadcasts indicted the Jews as being responsible for all the major national

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[6] Ibid., p. 99.

[7] A purported account of a Jewish conspiracy to sieze control of the world, disproved by reputable scholars.

problems. When the government finally silenced Social Justice, in April, 1942, it was for violation of the sedition law. In the hearing before Postmaster General Walker, evidence, consisting of quotations from the magazine, were presented which alleged that every issue since Pearl Harbor had been seditious.[8] All these activities seemed to confirm Coughlin's disillusionment with democracy. A foreshadowing of his subsequent advocacy of fascism is found in a statement made in Des Moines, Iowa, in September, 1936 when the result of the election was no longer in doubt. He told a journalist that, ". . . Democracy is doomed, this is our last election. . . it is fascism or communism. We are at the crossroads. . . I take the road to fascism."[9]

In concluding, it is perhaps well to allow Coughlin to speak for himself. In December, 1962 and January, 1963, he broke a two decade silence by granting interviews to the Detroit News and a representative of C.B.S. News. In the first, he stated that "bigotry is passé. . . and is the private pursuit of professional hate peddlers," and also that the President should not be criticized because "we only have one president at a time. . . and he has to make the decisions."[10]

In the more extensive interview, granted to Bernard Eisman, Coughlin admitted that:

> Well, I suppose I committed an egregious error which I am the first to admit when I permitted myself to attack persons. I could never bring myself to philosophize the morality of that now. It was a young man's mistake . . .

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[8] New York Times, May 5, 1942.

[9] Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval, p. 629.

[10] Detroit News Story quoted in the Grand Rapids Press, April 4, 1965.

In analyzing his career in the depression era Coughlin recalled that:

> At times I reconsider many things. First of all, the whole philosophic structure of what I was trying to do was open to correction and improvement. No clergyman has business injecting himself into the practical side of politics. . . I could have done much better had I been more mature in my thinking at the time, and I could have accomplished much more if I had retained the advocacy of my principles.

When questioned concerning his alleged anti-Semitism he replied:

> It's quite possible, if not probable that those who didn't agree with me took the viewpoint that I was against the men on account of their religion or their race, which wasn't true.

The priest explained his conception of social justice by saying:

> Well, at that time it was rather nebulous in my mind as in the minds of most persons who were attempting social justice. As I conceive it, it was a new field. . . it had existed in theory. It had existed in the abstract, but very few of us had tried to put it into practice. My concept of social justice at the time reveals this—to give the underprivileged more opportunities to rise from their poor estate.

In reference to reappraising his past career, Coughlin commented that:

> . . . having attained this three score and ten with the powers of observation that a younger man lacks. . . you really can reappraise things. No. It's not agonizing at all. . . I think it's the humilities that an old man acquires. A young man knows nothing or very little about it.

The final question concerned the circumstances that led to his going off the air. The priest responded:

> Oh, I prefer not to reappraise those things or recall them even, because it would lead me into too many personal channels. And so let the dead past bury its dead. [11]

This exceedingly candid interview serves as the best conclusion to a stormy career. That Father Charles E. Coughlin was an interesting and intriguing phenomenon of the depression era cannot

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[11] Bernard Eisman, "Reflections of a Radio Priest," Focus Midwest, II (February, 1963), pp. 8-10.

be denied. His brilliant molding of public opinion via the newest technological innovation—the radio—contrasts sharply with his advocacy of archaic and intrinsically faulty ideas. His ecclesiastical vocation is at variance with his resort to vituperation and personal invective. Where he belongs in the structure of American political protest has caused considerable controversy. The theory that he is a link between the Populist protest of the 1890's and the McCarthy-John Birch agitation of the present era has much to support it. All these groups possess interesting similarities in their views on foreign affairs, monetary policy, and racism. Also, much of their hard-core support comes from the Midwest. Intriguing though it may be, this theory has not been proved and only further investigation can determine its verity. The author can only agree with the priest in his comment released to Life Magazine in 1955. "It was a horrible mistake to enter politics."

Appendix I

Preamble and Principles of the NATIONAL UNION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Establishing my principles upon this preamble, namely, that we are creatures of a beneficent God, made to love and to serve Him in this world and enjoy Him forever in the next; that all this world's wealth of field, of forest, of mine and of river has been bestowed upon us by a kind Father, therefore I believe that wealth, as we know it, originates from natural resources and from the labor which the children of God expend upon these resources. It is all ours except for the harsh, cruel grasping ways of wicked men who first concentrated wealth into the hands of a few, then dominated states, and finally commenced to pit state against state in the frightful catastrophes of commercial warfare.

Following this preamble, there shall be the principles of social justice towards the realization of which we must strive:

1. I believe in liberty of conscience and liberty of education, not permitting the state to dictate either my worship to my God or my chosen avocation in life.

2. I believe that every citizen willing to work shall receive a just, living, annual wage which will enable him both to maintain and educate his family according to the standards of American decency.

3. I believe in nationalizing those public resources which by their very nature are too important to be held in the control of private individuals.

4. I believe in private ownership of all other property.

5. I believe in upholding the right to private property but in controlling it for the public good.

6. I believe in the abolition of the privately owned Federal Reserve Banking system and the establishment of a Government owned Central Bank.

7. I believe in rescuing from the hands of private owners the right to coin and regulate the value of money, which right must be restored to Congress where it belongs.

8. I believe that one of the chief duties of this Government owned Central Bank is to maintain the cost of living on an even keel and arrange for the repayment of dollar debts with equal value dollars.

9. I believe in the cost of production plus a fair profit for the farmer.

10. I believe not only in the right of the laboring man to organize in unions but also in the duty of the Government, which that laboring man supports, to protect these organizations against the vested interests of wealth and of intellect.

11. I believe in the recall of all non-productive bonds and therefore in the alleviation of taxation.

12. I believe in the abolition of tax exempt bonds.

13. I believe in broadening the base of taxation according to the principles of ownership and the capacity to pay.

14. I believe in the simplification of government and the further lifting of crushing taxation from the slender revenues of the laboring class.

class.

15. I believe that, in the event of a war for the defense of our nation and its liberties, there shall be a conscription of wealth as well as a conscription of men.

16. I believe in preferring the sanctity of human rights to the sanctity of property rights; for the chief concern of government shall be for the poor because, as it is witnessed, the rich have ample means of their own to care for themselves.

These are my beliefs. These are the fundamentals of the organization which I present to you under the name of the National Union for Social Justice. It is your privilege to reject or to accept my beliefs; to follow me or to repudiate me.

Appendix II

THE PLATFORM OF THE UNION PARTY

1. America shall be self-contained and self-sustained—no foreign entanglements, be they political, economic, financial or military.

2. Congress and Congress alone shall coin, issue and regulate all the money and credit in the United States through a central bank of issue.

3. Immediately following the establishment of the central bank of issue, Congress shall provide for the retirement of all tax-exempt, interest-bearing bonds and certificates of indebtedness of the Federal Government, and shall refinance all the present agricultural mortgage indebtedness for the farmer and all the home mortgage indebtedness for the city owner by the use of its money and credit which it now gives to the control of private bankers.

4. Congress shall legislate that there will be an assurance of a living annual wage for all laborers capable of working and willing to work.

5. Congress shall legislate that there will be an assurance of production at a profit for the farmer.

6. Congress shall legislate that there will be assurance of reasonable and decent security for the aged, who, through no fault of their own, have been victimized and exploited by an unjust economic system which has so concentrated wealth in the hands of a few that it has impoverished great masses of our people.

to the end that these small industries and enterprises may not only survive and prosper but that they may be multiplied.

13. Congress shall protect private property from confiscation through unnecessary taxation with the understanding that the human rights of the masses take precedence over the financial rights of the classes.

14. Congress shall set a limitation upon the net income of any individual in any one year and a limitation of the amount that such an individual may receive as a gift or as an inheritance, which limitation shall be executed through taxation.

15. Congress shall re-establish conditions so that the youths of the nation as they emerge from schools and colleges, will have the opportunity to earn a decent living while in the process of perfecting themselves in a trade or profession.

APPENDIX III

THE UNION PARTY VOTE IN 1936

State	Name on Ballot	Votes
Alabama	Union	551
Arizona	Union	3,307
Arkansas		
California		
Colorado	Union	9,962
Connecticut	Union	21,805
Delaware	Union	442
Florida	Union	1
Georgia	Union	136
Idaho	Union	7,678
Illinois	Union Progressive	89,439
Indiana	Union	19,407
Iowa	Union	29,687
Kansas	Write in	494
Kentucky	Union	12,501
Louisiana		
Maine	Union	7,581
Maryland		
Massachusetts	Union	118,639
Michigan	The Third Party	75,795
Minnesota	Union	74,296
Mississippi		
Missouri	Union	14,630
Montana	Union	5,539
Nebraska	Union	12,847
Nevada		
New Hampshire	Union	4,819
New Jersey	National Union for Social Justice	9,405
New Mexico	Union	924
New York		
North Carolina	Union	2
North Dakota	Union	36,708
Ohio	Union	132,212
Oklahoma		
Oregon	Independent Union	21,831
Pennsylvania	Royal Oak	67,467
Rhode Island	Union	19,569
South Carolina		

State	Name on Ballot	Votes
South Dakota	Independent	10,338
Tennessee	Union	296
Texas	Union	3,177
Utah	Union	1,121
Vermont		
Virginia	Union	223
Washington	Union	17,463
West Virginia		
Wisconsin	Union	60,297
Wyoming	Union	1,653

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