

## Huey Long's challenge to the establishment

Huey P. Long, governor of Louisiana (1928-32) and U.S. senator (1930-35), was born in impoverished Winn Parish (county) in 1893. History notes Winn Parish for its stubborn opposition to the Confederacy.

Largely self-educated, Long gained a law degree and won election to the state railroad commission. A colorful and humorous young man, Long built a statewide support through legal battles against Standard Oil Co. and the entrenched Louisiana establishment. He was elected governor in 1928.

In the next four years, Governor Long made good his promises by carrying out the most far-reaching infrastructure-building program of his time, constructing roads, bridges, hospitals, and universities. Long provided funding that quadrupled state funding for public schools. He provided free books to *all* schoolchildren. Removing an impediment to voting rights, Long organized the repeal of the state poll tax in 1934, enfranchising hundreds of thousands of poor citizens.

While Huey Long is today presented by revisionist historians as a "political extremist," power-hungry machine politician and an "American fascist," history tells quite another story.

Part of an emerging independent political movement, Senator Long became allied with such figures as Sen. William Borah of Idaho, Rep. William Lemke of North Dakota, and Father Charles Coughlin of Detroit. The first politician to use national radio, Long's paid radio broadcasts built national support; after one such broadcast, 30,000 letters a day poured in for three weeks. Again, taking on entrenched financial interests by name, Long

broke with Franklin Roosevelt over the latter's obedience to the Bernard Baruch and Morgan interests. He denounced Baruch's National Recovery Act as the "National Racketeering Act" and as "corporatist" à la Mussolini.

### Fighting for economic justice

In the U.S. Senate Long forced the rewrite of the Glass-Steagall Act into a bill restructuring national banking and guaranteeing bank deposits. Through the McCarran Amendment, Long won "prevailing wages" in work relief programs, over the President's opposition. Long successfully organized the Senate passage of the Frazier-Lemke bill saving thousands of farmers from foreclosure.

From an impoverished cultural background, Long was forced to defend himself against ruthless enemies. From the beginning, Long had fought using raw political power, and his growing popular base of support, to gain and hold political power in Louisiana. The national media were turned against him, his removal from the U.S. Senate sought. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau unleashed the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against Long and his organization.

Yet, within his marked limitations, Long was successful. Nationally, his populist "shave the wealth" clubs counted over 4.5 million members in over 27,000 chapters in 1935. Despite his enemies, and in part due to them, Long was poised for a possible independent presidential campaign. Elements of the national media now called for his assassination, and public vigilante organizations were organized by Long's Louisiana opponents, including within Freemasonry and the Ku Klux Klan.

On Sept. 8, 1935, Sen. Huey P. Long was shot, dying two days later of complications from a poorly performed surgical operation. He was 42 years old.

—Brian Lantz

Meyer Lansky's bagman "Kid Cann" out of Twin Cities in Minnesota, has set up casinos in Louisiana on the Indian reservations of the Coushatta and Tunica-Biloxi tribes. Pratt Hotel Corp., owners of the The Sands casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey, is bidding for rights to develop riverboat gambling in Shreveport. The local elected officials of Baton Rouge and Lake Charles, not to mention their local "leading citizens," have thrown themselves at potential suitors. Across the Mississippi River, eight cities in Mississippi have invited in "developers" of floating casinos.

### Time running out

Unlike Huey Long, Louisiana's elected officials today are refusing to face the cause of the international oligar-

chy's economic depression. Budget crises, now hitting the state and local governments hardest, as they lack the power to print currency, are the result, and Louisiana is sinking fast.

Out of an adjusted budget of \$4.2 billion, the state is currently paying out over \$600 million in debt service on general obligation bonds and toward the "unfunded, accrued liability" in the state's retirement system. Taking into account "gray area" obligations, the annual debt service payments are running at \$800 million a year, one-fifth the current 1992-93 state budget.

The problem for Edwards and his legislature is that their casino won't even be completed until 1995. Blowing smoke about \$200 million that does not exist will not pay next year's