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Interwar Years

The Turning of a Tide

What drives an ally to become the most outspoken opponent? What political decision was made to drive Huey P Long to the opposing side of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal? Was it just one turn of chance or were there others? There may not be one single moment that can be vilified as the instant that the Kingfisher turned on FDR; or a Alan Brinkley points out in his book, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression*, the moment that Long felt FDR turned on the people.

Anyone gifted with the ability to be a good public speaker will no doubt have a following. Huey P Long is no exception. But as spokesman for the common man eager to break out of the Depression with Roosevelt's help, Long felt a stinging blow when Roosevelt was seen and reported as meeting with the movers and shakers of the market and capitalism. Roosevelt's hand out and aid to "Mr. Morgan" and "Mr. Rockefeller" was spit in the eye of the Louisiana Senator.

Long felt that if Roosevelt needed money to fund his plans, he should get them from taxes levied on the most wealthy and not from cuts on those funds going to people that were already in need. Those people who were losing their help agreed. The populace soon had a hero. A brother in a position to help is what Long became to the downtrodden and suffering. This idea under Long's careful political sculpting paired with the religious fervor in which Father Coughlin brought on his radio show soon led to a huge following of the Forgotten Men. They were in the business of reminding FDR that, to them, it seemed that he had forgotten them too.

Long's power lie not only in his ability to present well, but was also propped up by his personality: his larger than life personality. He was a towering, if not annoying, presence on the senate floor, reminding his fellow senators of whom exactly was in need and how they should go about

handling it. He would get his message through to them and the president if it was the last thing he did. Maybe it was. Roosevelt knew that Long was no laughing matter and considered him “one of the two most dangerous men in the country (the other, he later added, was Douglas MacArthur.)”

Pinpointing the one thing that drove Long to become FDR’s most outspoken opponent may be difficult, but pinpointing the catalyst that drove it forward and gave it fuel is not. The Louisiana Senator took it as a slap in the face every time the Roosevelt met with, talked to, or rendered any kind of sympathy, aid, or even amicable feelings towards anyone that Long felt was too well off, especially the Morgans and the Rockefellers.

Did long take things too personal, was he really looking out for the average man, would he have continued to hold the title of demagogue had he not been assassinated? Then answer is so simple, once the flowery language and showmanship and political hobnobbing is all scraped aside. Long saw establishment and business as the enemy, this meant that Morgan, Rockefeller and their brotherhood of monetary control were the enemy as well. This then is the answer: The friend of my enemy is my enemy.