

Would You Vote For This Man?

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Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [History](#)

Would you vote for a guy who planned to surround himself with like-minded people who'd run the state like a machine? A man who'd pick fights with big oil, big pharma and Wall Street? A man who'd shrug off divisive issues –like abortion, stem cells and gay marriage– and focus on poverty, jobs, redistribution, and class?

Would you vote for a firebrand, a demagogue, a populist, a leftist tyrant? Who you vote for someone who'd bend the rules to make the country a fairer place for everyone?

And, what if he wasn't perfect? What if he'd had affairs with a number of women, or embezzled a lot of money, or been kicked out of college for cheating on exams? Would you give up on him or vote for him anyway?

Long was called “the Kingfish” because he ran Louisiana like his personal empire. He filled the statehouse with his own people and ran roughshod over the rich families in Baton Rouge. The big money folks hated his guts, and for good reason.

Wouldn't you like to vote for a guy that was hated by big business, hated by the 1 percent, hated by Wall Street? Wouldn't you like the chance to vote for someone who was willing to take them all on; someone who'd promise to re-regulate the system and tax the hell out of every billionaire fatcat in America?

That's the type of guy Long was. Long supported FDR's New Deal, but didn't think the policies went far enough. He wanted a radical redistribution of the country's wealth which put him at loggerheads with Roosevelt. He said, “Whenever this administration has gone to the left I have voted with it, and whenever it has gone to the right I have voted against it.”

Right on. What politician has the courage to say that today?

FDR was afraid of Long and tried to make it rough on him. He had him investigated by the IRS, but the investigation turned up nothing.

Long was adamantly opposed to the Federal Reserve, foreign wars, and the massive concentration of wealth held by a few billionaire bankers and industrialists.

He called his economic program “Share the Wealth”. The plan was unabashedly socialistic; a progressive program for free college education, social security, health care, veterans benefits, and public works programs. All the things that liberals say they want. When critics accused him of communism, he answered, “Hell no. This plan is the only defense this country's got against communism.”

Smart guy. He knew that Americans love socialism; they just don't like the word socialism. It sounds "foreign" to them.

This is from Wikipedia: "Some historians believe that pressure from Long and his organization contributed to Roosevelt's "turn to the left" in 1935. He enacted the Second New Deal, including the Social Security Act, the Works Progress Administration, the National Labor Relations Board, Aid to Dependent Children, the National Youth Administration, and the Wealth Tax Act of 1935. In private, Roosevelt candidly admitted to trying to "steal Long's thunder."

Roosevelt capitalized off Long's populism, but then tried to destroy him.

Long was assassinated on September 8, 1935 at the State Capitol by a lone gunman. He was planning to run for president against Roosevelt. He was 42 years old when he died.

Long has been vilified as a powermonger and a demagogue. He had his shortcomings, but his devotion to working people was never in doubt. He was a tireless fighter for the little guy and he made life miserable for the big shots.

Here's a clip from a song by Randy Newman called "The Kingfish" that sums it up pretty well:

"Who built the highway in Baton Rouge
Who put up the highway and built the schools
Who looks after shitkickers like you
The Kingfish do....

"Who took on the Standard Oil men
And whipped their ass,
Just like he promised he'd do?
Ain't no Standard Oil men gonna run this state,
Gonna be run by little folks like me and you.

We could use a guy like Huey Long today.

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