

CHAPTER
15

Section 1

PRIMARY SOURCE *from* **Father Coughlin's Anti-New Deal Speech**

Father Charles Coughlin often discussed politics on his weekly radio broadcast, the "Golden Hour of the Little Flower." In a speech aired on WABC on June 19, 1936, Coughlin endorsed William Lemke's third-party presidential candidacy and attacked President Roosevelt. As you read part of this speech, consider Coughlin's opposition to the New Deal.

No man in modern times received such plaudits from the poor as did Franklin Roosevelt when he promised to drive the money changers from the temple—the money changers who had clipped the coins of wages, who had manufactured spurious money and who had brought proud America to her knees.

March 4, 1933! I shall never forget the inaugural address, which seemed to reecho the very words employed by Christ Himself as He actually drove the money changers from the temple.

The thrill that was mine was yours. Through dim clouds of the Depression this man Roosevelt was, as it were, a new savior of his people!

Oh, just a little longer shall there be needless poverty! Just another year shall there be naked backs! Just another moment shall there be dark thoughts of revolution! Never again will the chains of economic poverty bite into the hearts of simple folks as they did in the past days of the Old Deal!

Such were our hopes in the springtime of 1933.

My friends, what have we witnessed as the finger of time turned the pages of the calendar? Nineteen hundred and thirty-three and the National Recovery Act which multiplied profits for the monopolists; 1934 and the AAA [Agricultural Adjustment Act] which raised the price of food-stuffs, by throwing back God's best gifts in His face; 1935 and the Banking Act which rewarded the exploiters of the poor, the Federal Reserve bankers and their associates, by handing over to them the temple from which they were to have been cast!

In 1936, when our disillusionment is complete, we pause to take inventory of our predicament. You citizens have shackled about your limbs a tax bill of \$35 billion, most of which . . . was created by a flourish of a fountain pen. Your erstwhile savior, whose golden promises ring upon the counter of performance with the cheapness of tin, bargained with the money changers that, with 70 billion laboring hours in the ditch, or in the factory, or behind the plow, you

and your children shall repay the debt which was created with a drop of ink in less than ten seconds.

Is that driving the money changers out of the temple?

Every crumb you eat, every stitch of clothing you wear, every menial purchase which you make is weighted down with an unseen tax as you work and slave for the debt merchants of America. But the \$55 billion of debt bonds, held mostly by the debt merchants and the well-circumstanced of this country, have been ably safeguarded from taxation by this peerless leader who sham-battles his way along the avenue of popularity with his smile for the poor and his blindness for their plight. Is that driving the money changers from the temple? . . .

It is not pleasant for me who coined the phrase "Roosevelt or ruin" —a phrase fashioned upon promises—to voice such passionate words. But I am constrained to admit that "Roosevelt or ruin" is the order of the day because the money changers have not been driven from the temple. . . .

Alas! The temple still remains the private property of the money changers. The golden key has been handed over to them for safekeeping—the key which is now fashioned in the shape of a double cross.

from Charles E. Coughlin, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, July 1, 1936, 613–616.

Activity Options

1. With a small group of classmates, create a radio call-in show hosted by Father Coughlin. Role-play Coughlin, callers who support Roosevelt's New Deal, and callers who agree with Coughlin.
2. Analyze the objections to Roosevelt's New Deal that Coughlin expresses in this speech excerpt. Then discuss the validity of his arguments with a group of classmates.
3. Deliver this speech excerpt to the class. Try to use a tone of voice and a rate of speaking that will most effectively convey Coughlin's message.