



## **Guide to the Social Justice Collection 1931-1969**

Phillips Memorial Library, Special and Archival Collections  
1 Cunningham Square  
Providence, RI 02918-0001  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Creator(s):</b>	Coughlin, (Charles E.),1891-1979
<b>Title:</b>	Social Justice Collection
<b>Dates:</b>	1931-1969
<b>Quantity:</b>	9 box(es)
<b>Abstract:</b>	The <i>Social Justice</i> newspaper was published between 1936 and 1942 by Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, radio orator and leader of the National Union for Social Justice. The collection contains publish monographs of Coughlin's sermons and lectures, and a complete set of the weekly publication, the <i>Social Justice</i> .
<b>Identification:</b>	rppc_mssocialjustice
<b>Language:</b>	The records are in English.
<b>Repository:</b>	Phillips Memorial Library, Special and Archival Collections 1 Cunningham Square Providence, RI 02918-0001 <a href="http://www.providence.edu/archives/">http://www.providence.edu/archives/</a>

## Biographical Information

Reverend Charles Edward Coughlin, radio orator, publisher of the magazine *Social Justice*, and head of the political organization, the National Union for Social Justice, was one of the most influential personalities to arise in America during the 1930s. His speeches and writings targeted the ills of socialism, communism, and capitalist indulgences, which Coughlin viewed as the impetuses for the economic and political crises of the time. Due to his ability to engage the American people, Coughlin rivaled Franklin D. Roosevelt in both popularity and influence. However, with the advent of World War II, his anti-Semitic remarks, isolationist stance, and bellicose tone, caused the federal government and Church superiors to silence him. Nevertheless, the evidence of Coughlin's influence over the American people serves to represent the tenor and sentiments of this period.

Charles E. Coughlin was born in Hamilton, Ontario on October 25, 1891 to Thomas J. Coughlin, a Great Lakes stoker from Indiana, and to Amelia Mahoney Coughlin, a Canadian seamstress. Raised a Catholic, Coughlin attended St. Michael's College in 1911 before studying for the priesthood at St. Basil's Seminary. During his preparation, Coughlin was introduced to Pope Leo XIII encyclical, *On the Condition of the Working Class* (1891), which advocated for social justice rooted in Catholic thought, and for the eradication of both socialism and the excesses of capitalism. These ideas became the foundation for Coughlin's later arguments against socialist and capitalist practices.

Upon ordination in 1916, Coughlin taught at Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario until 1922. Then, he was assigned to a small parish in Kalamazoo, Michigan and was later placed at the Shrine of the Little Flower Church in Royal Oaks, Michigan in 1926. He would serve this parish until his retirement in 1966.

The radio program that brought Fr. Coughlin to the national public stage began as a response to a Ku Klux Klan cross burning at the Little Flower Church. Coughlin believed that if he could explain Christian teachings to the local community, he could eliminate these types of incidents. His show first aired on October 3, 1926 and was designed to teach the Catholic faith to children. However, it soon attracted a broader audience and the CBS radio network began broadcasting the program nationally in 1930.

With the spread of the Great Depression, Coughlin soon shifted the focus of his radio sermons to political and economic topics. The content of the shows centered on the evils of socialism, communism, the greed of capitalism, and the need for equalizing reforms. Appealing to the sentiments of the public, Coughlin's fame spread. The House of Representatives came to recognize him as an expert on communism and invited Coughlin to address the Committee to Investigate Communist Activities. His position on these topics was further developed in the works, *Christ or the Red Serpent* (1930), and *By the Sweat of Thy Brow* (1931).

In 1931, Coughlin began to criticize the Hoover Administration for its failure to address the economic crisis, and CBS refused to renew his contract due to his inflammatory tone. Unhindered, Coughlin organized his own network that eventually grew to forty-seven stations with an estimated audience of 3.5 million people per week.

Coughlin's radio sermons supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal, and advocated for nationalizing the gold standard, seizing federal control over the banking system, restructuring the Federal Reserve, and adopting a form of corporatism, analogous to the system found in fascist Italy. He cemented these ideas in the work, *The New Deal in Money* (1933). By 1934, Coughlin had a strong following of supporters which he organized into the political group, the National Union of Social Justice.

Despite Coughlin's initial support of Roosevelt, he soon became disillusioned by the Roosevelt Administration's policies, which he believed were paradoxically tainted by both international socialism and Wall Street capitalism. As a result his radio show became increasingly bellicose in tone as he attacked Roosevelt's policies. The Roosevelt administration then began to seek ways to reign in Coughlin.

Joseph Kennedy, Bishop Francis Spellman, and Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII) were among prominent Catholic leaders who looked towards the Vatican to stem Coughlin's provocative remarks. However, because the Bishop of Detroit, Michael Gallagher, supported Coughlin, the Vatican had difficulty in restricting him.

Coughlin became a political supporter of Huey Long's 1935 campaign against Roosevelt. When Long was assassinated, Coughlin and The National Union of Social Justice became the center for the new Union Party, a political organization with a strong base of support from mid-western nativists. The group ran a candidate against Roosevelt in the 1936 election, but they were largely defeated. In 1938, Coughlin changed the name of the National Union of Social Justice to the Christian Front.

From 1936 until 1941, Fr. Coughlin's popularity and influence in America rivaled that of President Roosevelt. His weekly radio sermons promoted an isolationist foreign policy and Coughlin came to endorse the group, America First. Coughlin's speeches directly appealed to the tenets of the time and played on the fears and concerns of the American people. Many of his supporters were among those who decried the Asylum Laws, which permitted Jewish refugees to enter America.

His program, however, became increasingly anti-Semitic, and Coughlin blamed Jewish bankers for the Russian Revolution, Marxist atheism, the Great Depression, and for trying to bring America into a European war. In 1936, Coughlin began to publish the magazine, *Social Justice*, which frequently contained anti-Semitic rhetoric, including a copy of the fraudulent "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." In addition, he voiced sympathy for Hitler and Mussolini, who he viewed as bulwarks against the Soviet Union's spread of communism.

At first Coughlin's stance drew in substantial public approval, however, the changing international climate hampered his influence. Before long many radio stations refused to broadcast his programs, and other networks insisted that Coughlin follow pre-approved scripts. In 1939, the Code Committee of the National Association of Broadcasting responded to the invasion of Poland by limiting radio shows that centered on controversial public issues. This regulation severely restricted the content of Coughlin's shows.

Undeterred, Coughlin continued to print the *Social Justice* to voice his opinions. This approach also met obstacles when in 1940, the FBI invaded a Christian Front branch in New York, and found a cache of weapons that were believed to be intended for use against Jews, communists, and congressmen. While Coughlin was not directly tied to this plot, his affiliation with the Christian Front damaged his reputation. Upon further investigation under the Espionage Act, Coughlin's privilege to use the United States Post Office to deliver *Social Justice* was revoked.

The final blow to Coughlin's influence came in 1942. His initial support for Hitler and Mussolini, coupled with his continued condemnation of the Soviet Union, America's ally, and persistent push for isolationism, no longer represented the majority opinion. Viewed as a political liability, Archbishop of Detroit Edward Francis Mooney ordered Coughlin to abandon the airwaves, stop production of *Social Justice*, and return to his parish duties. Although Coughlin was forced to comply, he continued to write a number of pamphlets during the 1950s and 1960s in which he condemned communism.

Coughlin remained pastor of the Shrine of the Little Flower until his retirement in 1966. After a series of health ailments, Father Charles E. Coughlin passed away in Bloomfield, Michigan on October 27, 1979.

### Biographical Timeline

1891 Oct 25	Charles Edward Coughlin born to Thomas J. Coughlin and Amelia Mahoney Coughlin.
1911-1916	Attends St. Basil's Seminary.
1916	Ordained into the Roman Catholic priesthood. Begins teaching at Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario.
1922-1926	Serves local parishes in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
1926	Assigned as pastor to the Shrine of the Little Flower Church in Royal Oaks, Michigan.
1926 Oct 3	First broadcast of Coughlin's radio show.
1930	CBS network nationally broadcasts Coughlin's radio show. <i>Christ or the Red Serpent</i> published.
1931	<i>By the Sweat of Thy Brow</i> published. Coughlin begins the Little Flower network after CBS does not renew contract.
1933	<i>The New Deal in Money</i> published.
1934	Establishes political organization, National Union of Social Justice.
1935	Endorses Huey Long as presidential candidate.
1936	National Union of Social Justice becomes center of the Union Party and runs William Lemke as presidential candidate. Begins publication of <i>Social Justice</i> magazine.
1938	Changes National Union of Social Justice to the Christian Front. <i>Social Justice</i> prints "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."
1939	Code Committee of the National Association of Broadcasting (NAB) restricts radio programs, such as Coughlin's, which focus on controversial public issues.
1940	FBI raids Christian Front branch in New York and finds cache of weapons, Coughlin not directly involved but implicated due to connections.

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| 1942 | Investigations under the Espionage Act remove <i>Social Justice's</i> second class mailing privileges with the United States Post Office. Archbishop of Detroit Edward Francis Mooney forbids Coughlin to continue activities on the radio or with <i>Social Justice</i> . |
| 1966 | Coughlin retires from position as pastor at the Shrine at the Church of the Little Flower.   |
| 1979 | Charles E. Coughlin dies from health related issues in Bloomfield, Michigan.   |

### Scope and Content Note

The publications which encompass the Social Justice Collection were the literary mediums through which Coughlin expressed his political and economic opinions. The collection features the complete series of the *Social Justice* periodical. Additional materials include monographs of Coughlin's lectures and sermons, which were published by the Union Party, along with books and pamphlets written by Coughlin.

The magazine, *Social Justice*, spans from 1936 until 1942, and criticizes socialist and capitalist practices, in addition to addressing other political issues from this period. The lectures, sermons, books and pamphlets also present Coughlin's positions on communism and capitalism during the 1930s and throughout the 1960s. Coughlin's controversial positions on these topics are defended in several of these publications.

### Arrangement

This collection is arranged into two series.

#### Series List

- Social Justice Periodicals
- Publications

### Index Terms

Researchers wishing to find related materials should search the HELIN catalog using these index terms.

### Names

- Coughlin, Charles E. (Charles Edward), 1891-1979
- Kennedy, Joseph P. (Joseph Patrick), 1888-1969
- Lemke, William, 1878-1950
- Long, Huey Pierce, 1893-1935
- Mooney, Edward, 1882-1958
- Pius XII, Pope, 1876-1958
- Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945
- Spellman, Francis, 1889-1967

### Subjects

- America First Committee
- Christian Front
- National Union for Social Justice (U.S.)
- Shrine of the Little Flower (Royal Oak, Mich.)

Union Party (U.S. : 1936)

United States -- Economic policy -- Periodicals

United States -- Politics and government -- 1933-1945 -- Periodicals

United States -- Politics and government -- Periodicals

United States -- Social conditions -- Periodicals

### **Administrative Information**

#### **Custodial History**

The collection was privately owned by Mrs. Edward B. Kinsella of Pawtucket, Rhode Island prior to its donation to the College. collection.

#### **Preferred Citation**

Social Justice Collection, Providence College Library, Special and Archival Collections

#### **Acquisitions Information**

This collection was donated to Providence College by Mrs. Edward B. Kinsella in 1972.

#### **Processing Information**

This collection was processed in 1972.

#### **Restrictions**

Open for research.

Terms governing use and reproduction: Photocopying and scanning of materials is a fee based service available in the repository and is allowed at the discretion of the Librarian of Special and Archival Collections when in compliance to the College's policy on copyright and publication.

#### **Related Material**

There are no related materials for this collection.

No materials were separated from this collection.

## Inventory

**Series:** Social Justice

**Dates:** 1936-1942

**Extent:** 7 box(es)

**Material types:**  
magazines (periodicals)

### Scope and Content Note

This series contains a complete set of the magazine *Social Justice*. Rev. Charles E. Coughlin first published the periodical in 1936 as another way to speak out against socialist and capitalist practices. The title, *Social Justice*, refers to a concept originating with Pope Leo XIII that by implementing social justice based on Christian principles, communism and capitalism can be eradicated.

Although the magazine initially addressed the economic and political crises of the 1930s, it soon radiated with Coughlin's increasingly anti-Semitic and isolationist positions. Many of the articles resembled those of the Nazis minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, and one issue contained a reprint of the discredited "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

Due to its "pro-Axis propaganda" the magazine was investigated by Attorney General Francis Biddle in April of 1942. Under the Espionage Act, the magazine was suspended of its second-class mailing privilege by the United States Post Office, effectively halting its distribution to subscribers. That same year, the publication of the *Social Justice* ceased by direct order from Coughlin's superior, Archbishop of Detroit Edward Francis Mooney.

The series is missing the issue for May 2 1938, believed to have never been published.

### Arrangement

This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 1 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol I, nos. 1-19	1936 Mar 13-1936 Jul 20
Box 1 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol II, nos. 1-23	1936 Jul 27-1936 Dec 28
Box 2 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol. III, nos. 1-33	1937 Jan 4-1937 Aug 16
Box 2 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol. IV, nos. 1-19	1937 Aug 23-1937 Dec 27
Box 3 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol. V, nos. 1-8	1938 Jan 3-1938 Feb 21
Box 3 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol. 1A, nos. 1-17	1938 Feb 28-1938 Jun 27
Box 3 Folder 3	Social Justice, vol. 2A, nos. 1-26	1938 Jul 4-1938 Dec 26
Box 4 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol. 3A, nos. 1-26	1939 Jan 2-1939 Jun 26
Box 4 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol. 4A, nos. 1-26	1939 Jul 3-1939 Dec 25
	The 1939 Oct 16 issue, vol. 4A no. 16, is mislabeled as vol. 4A no. 15.	
Box 5 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol. 5A, nos. 1-26	1940 Jan 1-1940 Jun 24
Box 5 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol. 6, nos. 1-27	1940 Jul 1-1940 Dec 30
Box 6 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol. 7, nos. 1-26	1941 Jan 6-1941 Jun 30
Box 6 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol. 8, nos. 1-9	1941 Jul 7-1941 Sep 1
Box 7 Folder 1	Social Justice, vol. 8, nos. 10-26	1941 Sep 8-1941 Dec 29
Box 7 Folder 2	Social Justice, vol. 9, nos. 1-16	1942 Jan 5-1942 Apr 20
	The 1942 Mar 30 issue, vol. 9 no. 13, is mislabeled as vol. 9 no. 12.	

**Series:** Publications

**Dates:** 1931-1969

**Extent:** 2 box(es) 22 folders

**Material types:**

correspondence  
lectures  
pamphlets  
paperbacks  
periodicals  
sermons  
transcripts

### Scope and Content Note

The publications within this series include monographs of Rev. Charles E. Coughlin's sermons, lectures, and radio discourses, as well as pamphlets and books he wrote. Similar to the Social Justice periodical, these materials relay Coughlin's positions on the economic and political issues of the 1930s and early 1940s.

The series also contains anti-Coughlin publications, as well as materials written by Coughlin's supporters.

In addition, there is a copy of the pro-Union Party periodical, Current America, and printed materials from The Radio League of the Little Flower.

### Arrangement

This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 8 Folder 1	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Render to Caesar</i> . Royal Oak, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1931.	1931 Nov 22
Box 8 Folder 2	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Father Coughlin's Radio Discourses</i> . Royal Oak, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1932.	1931-1932
Box 8 Folder 3	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Driving Out the Money Changers</i> . Detroit, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1933.	1933 Apr 18
Box 8 Folder 4	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>The New Deal in Money</i> . Royal Oak, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1933.	1933 Dec
Box 8 Folder 5	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Eight Lectures on Labor, Capital and Justice</i> . Detroit, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1934.	1934 Apr
Box 8 Folder 6	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Lecture: The National Union for Social Justice</i> . Detroit, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1934.	1934 Nov 11
Box 8 Folder 7	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>A Series of Lectures on Social Justice</i> . Detroit, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1935.	1935 Mar
Box 8 Folder 8	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>A Series of Lectures on Social Justice</i> . Detroit, MI: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1936.	1936 Apr
Box 8 Folder 9	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Money!: Questions and Answers</i> . Royal Oaks, MI: The National Union for Social Justice, 1936.	1936

Box 8 Folder 10	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Sixteen Radio Lectures</i> . Royal Oaks, MI: Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, 1938.	1938
Box 8 Folder 11	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>"Am I an Anti-Semite?" - 9 Addresses on Various "ISMS" Answering the Question</i> . Detroit, MI: Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, 1939.	1938 Nov 1-1939 Jan 1
Box 9 Folder 1	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Money!: Questions and Answers</i> . Royal Oak, MI: Social Justice Publishing Company, 1939.	1939
Box 9 Folder 2	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>I Take My Stand</i> . Royal Oak, MI: Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, 1940.	1940
Box 9 Folder 3	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Helmet and Sword: Part I-III</i> . Bloomfield, MI: Helmet and Sword, Inc., 1968.	1968
Box 9 Folder 4	Coughlin, Father Charles E. <i>Bishops versus Pope</i> . Bloomfield, MI: Helmet and Sword, Inc., 1969.	1969
Box 9 Folder 5	Fahey, Rev. Denis, C.S.Sp. <i>The Rulers of Russia</i> . Detroit, MI: Social Justice Publishing Company, 1940.	1940
Box 9 Folder 6	Costello, E.J. <i>Current America</i> [Chicago] 1936 Sep 15, vol. I, no. I	1936 Sep 15
Box 9 Folder 7	<i>Father Coughlin: His "Facts" and Arguments</i> . New York City: General Jewish Council, 1939.	1939
Box 9 Folder 8	<i>Father Coughlin Self-Condemed</i> . Kansas City: Friends of Democracy, Inc.,	undated
Box 9 Folder 9	Fr. Coughlin's Bank Speech Explained - news clipping	undated
Box 9 Folder 10	Correspondence	1934-1939
Box 9 Folder 11	Radio League of the Little Flower	1935, 1940