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Union Party

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the war. It became the primary vehicle for "Unionist" opinion among white yeomen in the mountain regions.

With the implementation of military Reconstruction in 1867, the Republican Party faced the task of mobilizing thousands of newly enfranchised southern freedmen. The Union League seemed appropriate for this purpose because its clandestine character minimized outside intimidation. Funded by the Republican Party, scores of organizers spread through the southern states, initiating freedmen into the order. The response of the freedmen was dramatic, as hundreds of thousands joined the Union League within months. The organization became a major force within the southern Republican Party, becoming the nucleus of "Radical" factions in several states.

At the grass-roots level, however, the Union League movement took on a wider mission than simply the political maneuverings of a partisan club. League meetings were the scene of agrarian revolts, protesting authoritarian holdovers from slavery on the plantations. Talk of land redistribution, or "Forty Acres and a Mule," circulated freely in council meetings. League mobilization helped undermine efforts by landowners to maintain coercive methods of plantation discipline. In the cotton regions, for example, the League was integrally involved in the breakdown of gang labor and centralized management and the emergence of decentralized tenant farming as the paradigm form of plantation production.

By the late 1860s the organization was in decline throughout the South. Having successfully brought African-American voters into the party, Republican leaders saw little further use for the organization and ceased funding it. Further, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and similar terrorist organizations attacked the League at the local level. The national body survived until the 1890s as a "paper organization," but with little significance after its heyday during Reconstruction. Despite the rapid repression of the League in the South, it initiated a pattern of Black support for the Republican Party that lasted for over half a century.

See also: Abraham Lincoln

Michael W. Fitzgerald

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Union Party

In any nascent, still somewhat unknown political party, the unexpected death of a talented and highly charismatic leader would probably engender factionalism, disarray, an incapacity to attract political money, and poor electoral performance. The record of the Union Party's performance in the 1936 elections illustrates this general truth about political parties. As will become clear below, however, the Union Party's history also suggests the partially contingent nature of the New Deal's success.

The bullets with which Dr. Carl Weiss felled Senator Huey Long of Louisiana at the state capitol in Baton Rouge in 1935 also effectively killed the third-party movement that Long intended to lead in the 1936 elections. Long had developed a "Share Our Wealth" movement that clearly worried President Franklin Roosevelt and his political advisers. Long's assassination obviously improved the Democratic Party's already strong chances in 1936.

After Long's death, some of his allies put together a third party anyway—the Union Party. Organizationally it consisted of little more than a coalition of three men: Father Charles E. Coughlin of Michigan, the popular radio priest whose ideas mixed obsession with monetary policy with a soupçon of anti-Semitism and Roman Catholic social justice doctrine; the Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, a former Long assistant who took over the "Share Our Wealth" movement; and Dr. Francis Townsend, a California physician whose advocacy of very generous old age income security allowances played a key role in the development of American social security policy. These ideologues sought to appeal not only to their own followers but also to the ordinary, hard-pressed people that the flamboyant Long most likely would have attracted. They ran a competent and in some ways admirable politician, Republican Congressman William Lemke of North Dakota. But the funds raised for Lemke's presidential effort amounted to roughly what it costs today to run a single state legislative campaign in a medium-sized industrial state. Lemke had trouble with his backers, and he had trouble getting on the ballot in many states. He gained less than 2 percent of the national popular vote, failing to carry any states.

Yet a closer look at the Union Party's record reveals suggestive—although probably no more than suggestive—evidence about the threat that Huey Long might have posed to the New Deal had he lived to run his presidential campaign. Long may well have carried states in the South. Lemke's strength in North Dakota and Minnesota (13.4 percent and 6.6 percent respectively) were clearly votes for Lemke, but he also ran ahead of his national average in several other midwestern states; Long might have developed strength in these states. Finally, the data on the congressional campaigns of 1936 indicate that the Union Party enjoyed unusual local strength in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, and parts of Michigan. Long might have been able to construct a national, and possibly formidable, coalition.

The Union Party's history thus not only illustrates the importance of accident and leadership in party politics but also continues to suggest the partially contingent nature of the New Deal's success and consolidation.

See also: Charles E. Coughlin, William Lemke, Huey Long, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Francis Townsend

Richard M. Vallery

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Union Party (1860s)

Formed early in the Civil War by Republicans seeking to broaden the base of political support for their party and the war effort, the Union Party welcomed pro-war Democrats into the new organization, using it first to maintain power in closely contested state elections and then to secure the reelection of Abraham Lincoln.

The Union Party appeared first in Ohio in 1861 when both Democrats and Republicans feared that they could not win with the usual party labels. Nominating David Tod, a War Democrat for governor, the Union Party was controlled by Republican leaders but received sufficient votes from Democrats to defeat the regular Democratic nominee. In 1862, in a successful effort to retain control of the U.S. Congress, the Union Party strategy was used in other closely contested northern states, although wherever the Republicans were more secure (as in New England), they were much less willing to share power with Democrats. Throughout

the North, the more radical Republicans frequently resisted welcoming Democrats into their ranks.

Major victories for the Union Party in 1863 included John Brough's election as governor of Ohio over Clement Vallandigham and Andrew Curtin's as governor in Pennsylvania. In 1864 Republicans held a national Union convention to renominate Lincoln in an effort to show the bipartisan nature of the party. As a further appeal to dissatisfied Democrats, the Union Party nominated Democrat Andrew Johnson for Vice President.

With the death of President Lincoln and the growing division between Andrew Johnson and Congress in 1865, the Union Party coalition gradually broke apart. Unionists did hold a convention in Philadelphia in 1866, but by then most Republicans had left Johnson's Cabinet, and northern voters were increasingly antagonized by the President's Reconstruction policies. By the fall elections, old party labels had been restored as Republicans increased their control of Congress. The Union Party, a wartime strategy, could not survive the restoration of the Union itself.

See also: Andrew Johnson, Abraham Lincoln, Clement Vallandigham

Frederick J. Blue

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Unit Rule

The unit rule was one of the main procedures that the first Democratic-Republican Party national convention adopted when it met in Baltimore in 1832. Following the precedent of the first national party convention, held by the Antimasons in 1831, the Democrats also based each state's portion of delegates on its Electoral College representation, let each state determine its method for selecting national delegates, required a special majority (two-thirds rule) for nomination and created a national committee