

Irénée du Pont, lacking Shouse's political experience, almost shattered such claims the day after Shouse's public announcement. "The necessity for this association," said du Pont, "has become apparent in the continual gnawing at the vitals of the Constitution, both by change of its interpretation and by giving fictitious names to unconstitutional acts so as to make them appear constitutional." The League, he declared, "would not condone any unconstitutional act regardless of the politics of the transgressor." The New Deal, he stated, had done much harm to a large part of American business; the NRA, a serious affront to private property rights, should be repealed. Almost as an afterthought he added, "of course the association is strictly non-partisan."⁵³

The Liberty League quickly became the most important anti-Roosevelt organization in the country. Although it was never able to rally a significant grass roots membership, its rolls read like a Who's Who of American business leadership: Detroit industrialists like Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., Alvan Macauley and Henry B. Joy; Sewell L. Avery of Montgomery Ward; E. T. Weir of Weirton Steel; bankers, financiers, and lawyers, including W. R. Perkins, Frederic R. Coudert, Jr., and Raoul Desvergne; Edward F. Hutton, chairman of the board of General Foods Corporation; Frank C. Rand of Industrial Shoe Company; at least one prominent member of the motion picture industry, Hal E. Roach; and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of du Ponts and Pews.

It had almost unlimited financial resources, most of it from the du Pont family. From September, 1934, until November, 1936, the League spent over a million dollars in an attempt to destroy the New Deal. Money that was not spent on salaries and organizational work went into one of the most extensive propaganda campaigns of the twentieth century. The publication program of the Liberty League rivalled that of the country's largest publishers. Between August, 1934, and September, 1936, the League issued 177 separate titles and distributed over 5,000,000 copies. The potential audience far exceeded the number of copies distributed, for copies went to newspaper editors, press associations, radio stations, and libraries. In addition to its regular publishing program the League also provided canned editorials and news stories to approximately 1600 newspapers in fourteen western, midwestern, and southern states.⁵⁴

Shortly after the 1934 elections the Liberty League campaign against Roosevelt and the New Deal began in earnest. Its literature pictured the United States on the brink of chaos, threatened by bankruptcy, socialism, dictatorship, and tyranny. Few New Deal measures escaped its fire. The AAA was "economic and political quackery," a "legislative monstrosity," a "trend toward Fascist control of agriculture"; the Public Utility Holding Company Act was "a calamitous blow"; the Potato Control Act, "another step toward Socialism"; the NRA had pushed the nation into a "quicksand of visionary experimentation"; social security and relief were "an end of