



*The Real
Calvin Coolidge*

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Plymouth Notch, Vermont

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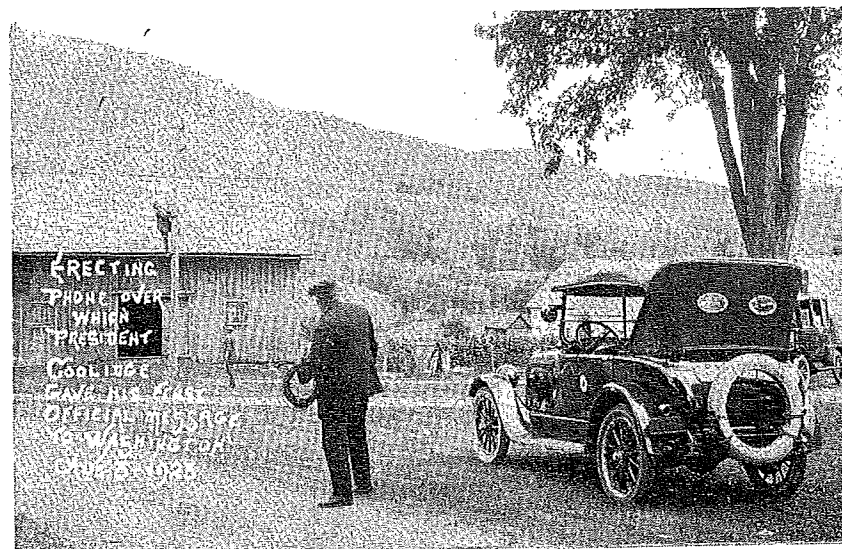
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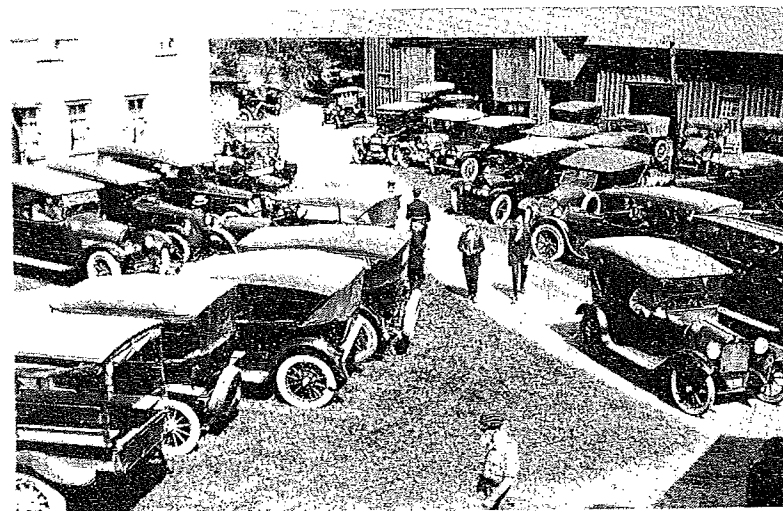
Opinions stated and conclusions drawn in The Real Calvin Coolidge are those of the contributing authors, which may or may not necessarily reflect those of The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, Inc.

These booklets are free gifts to members of the Foundation.

This edition is ninth in a continuing series which is also available for purchase through the Foundation office at Box 97, Plymouth, VT 05056. Copies are also sold at the Plymouth Notch Historic District during the season at the State of Vermont general store for \$2.95 each.



Original post card photographs contributed by Mrs. Olive Burnham.



Plymouth was discovered by the outside world when Vice President Coolidge became President Coolidge!

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The Real Calvin Coolidge is Number 9 in a series started in July of 1983 with reprints of the accounts originally published in *Good Housekeeping* magazine in the issues of February to June, 1935. These were first hand stories about Calvin Coolidge told by people who knew him best and edited with comments by Mrs. Grace Coolidge. Articles from this series along with original material submitted by our members comprise the current issue.

Our first essay, "Calvin Coolidge Speaks," is written by Howard Packard, Honorary Trustee, from Racine, Wisconsin. A longtime Foundation member and successful C.E.O. of Johnson Wax, Co., Mr. Packard writes that Calvin Coolidge's insights were enlightened for his time and are relevant to today's world.

We include two book reviews by authors who have written for *The Real Calvin Coolidge* in the past. In this issue Daniel J. Heisey reviews President Harry S. Truman's book, *Where the Buck Stops: The Personal and Private Writings of Harry S. Truman* and entitles his essay: "Giving Coolidge Hell." That gives a clue to Truman's opinions! J.R. Greene reviews a book about 1919 that unfairly blames Governor Coolidge for disorders in Boston during the Boston Police Strike. Mr. Greene reviews the record for us in his essay.

Once again we are indebted to Ms. Cynthia Bittinger for constructive guidance in bringing this material to final publication.

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Calvin Coolidge Speaks

by Howard M. Packard

The Coolidge Foundation is pleased to feature this timely and previously unpublished article in cooperation with its author, one of our honorary trustees.

The publication committee: John Coolidge, Robert H. Ferrell, John A. Lutz, Carolyn Miller, William M. Oman, Robert A. Sharp, John A. Waterhouse, and Lawrence Wikander.

In this essay, I will quote what President Coolidge said concerning some of the subjects which were very important in his time and are still important today.

First, let's step back and note the highlights of his distinguished career. He was born on July 4, 1872 in the remote, very small village of Plymouth, Vermont. His parents were leaders in the community but in modest circumstances, being farmers and storekeepers. His father held many town offices. From this setting, Calvin Coolidge went to the White House, to be sworn in as president in 1923 at the age of 51.

He graduated from Amherst College in 1895, established a law practice in Northampton, Massachusetts and also served in various city positions, being elected mayor in 1910 at the age of 38. He then progressed rapidly in state politics and was elected governor of Massachusetts in 1919 at age 47 and re-elected in 1920. In September, 1919, the Boston Police went on strike. After nights of rioting Governor Coolidge called out the State Guard. That ended the strike.

When Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, urged that the striking policemen be reinstated, Calvin Coolidge's reply captured the attention of the nation: "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time."

In June, 1920, the Republican National Convention considered him for President, and he was nominated for Vice President and elected at age 48. On the death of President Harding, he was sworn in as President, by his father in his native home, on August 3, 1923. In 1924 at age 52 he was elected President with 72% of the electoral college vote. He did "not choose to run in 1928," retired in March of 1929 at age 56. He died at his home in Northampton in January 1933 at age 60.

President Coolidge was a brilliant man. He was well educated and continued his studies all his life. His personal library of over 6,000 books is filled with the classics, history, and practical affairs. He had studied Greek, Latin, and French.

Calvin Coolidge was an excellent writer. He was a master of the short sentence, such as the famous one he wrote to Mr. Gompers. He was not an orator, but his speeches were carefully prepared and well delivered. His 1925 inaugural address was the first ever delivered over national radio. Howard H. Quint and Robert H. Ferrell, two professors who edited *The Talkative President, The Off-the-Record Press Conferences of Calvin Coolidge*, said that "when he let down his guard, when he felt he...would not be subject to misinterpretation...he could be so talkative...almost garrulous."

The subjects selected for this essay on which Calvin Coolidge expressed his views and principles are as follows: education, economics, new industries and job re-training, small business, tariffs and wages, attitude of labor and capital, federal budget, taxation and expenditures, localize taxation and expenditures, the Great Depression, unemployment compensation, working for world peace, treaty to outlaw war, disarmament and national defense, united Europe, the press-media, women and minorities in politics, and modest living.

EDUCATION

As a Massachusetts legislator and governor, Calvin Coolidge sponsored much higher salaries for teachers of all school levels and he believed in a practical education related to earning a living.

He rejected the idea that college is only to study for the professions. His concept was that education "broadens and sweetens individual existence." With this theory there is "no reason for confining colleges to the professions or to those of exceptional capacity." We will not "make an aristocracy of learning."¹ Graduates "will not be judged by their diplomas but by what they produce."²

Coolidge no doubt agreed with Thomas Jefferson who said: "Let us in education dream of an aristocracy of achievement arising out of a democracy of opportunity."³ Coolidge said: "As our industrial life becomes more complex and requires more and more technical knowledge, it will be increasingly difficult for the unskilled to find and hold employment. He advocated that young and mature people take advantage of "night school, university extension and correspondence school." He concluded: "The main value of a wage earner is in his mind."⁴

ECONOMICS

President Coolidge stated that people "work not for money but for goods and services. Wages come out of production. The employer cannot get them permanently out of any other source. Wages are raised or lowered with production."⁵

Unfortunately our system does not work well all the time. There have been many recessions and depressions with high unemployment and hardships. Former President Coolidge wrote in November of 1930: "Our system has worked greatly for the benefit of the people...[however] by its results it must be demonstrated that it is still the best instrument...That is the immediate problem which everyone responsible for business management must meet."⁶ This is so true in 1992 as well.

NEW INDUSTRIES AND JOB RE-TRAINING

President Coolidge studied our country's economic development and concluded "that general business never has found any saturation point."⁷ When some industries become obsolete, he advocated retraining employees in new skills just as is being done now. Writing in 1930, he cited a few examples of new industries, starting in the 1920's, such as the rapid development of radios, motion pictures, especially the "talkies," automobiles and aircraft. He said: "What course our great financial and scientific resources will take in the next era of development we do not know, but all past experience teaches that it will be an important advance in the economic welfare of the nation."⁸

These same views were held by Herbert Hoover who said: "New discoveries in science will continue to create a thousand new frontiers for those who still would adventure."⁹

In contrast to Coolidge and Hoover, in the campaign for President in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt said, in San Francisco: "...the American economy has reached maturity." He spoke of the need to consolidate gains already made, rather than embark upon further expansion. If the market no longer provided an equilibrium [of distribution], it was the duty of the state to move swiftly to protect the public interest"... "Every man has a right to life and...a right to make a comfortable living...as his ability permits."¹⁰

SMALL BUSINESS

Calvin Coolidge believed in the ingenuity of people. He wrote: "the natural and unconquerable impulse of human nature is to improve, to produce and to progress. Left to itself it will find a way."¹¹ He was a believer in small business, often pointing out that most employees are working for small companies.

Coolidge always believed that taxes impeded the growth of business, especially the establishment of smaller companies. Present-day federal tax rates are very heavy for small firms. The first \$50,000 of profit is taxed at 15% and the rate graduates up in steps so that with profits of \$335,000 and

more the tax rate is 34% per year. In these days of high prices, \$335,000 is not a great deal. Coolidge surely would say it is discouraging to tax the small company at the same rate as the huge companies earning millions of dollars. Small businesses need to accumulate capital from their earnings and taxes should be much lower on the first \$1,000,000 or more of profit per year.

TARIFFS AND WAGES

President Coolidge said: "Our policy requires fair wages for both domestic and foreign production. We have no market for blood and tears...We are unwilling to profit by the distress of foreign people. We do not want their blood money."¹² Therefore, Coolidge favored tariffs to prevent the "dumping on our markets" of products produced by such labor."¹²

On the other hand, Coolidge believed that if foreign wages and working conditions were not of the "blood money category," U.S. manufacturers should not rely on U.S. tariffs to protect them from foreign competition. For example, in the 1930's, just as today, the U.S. auto manufacturers faced stiff foreign competition. President Coolidge noted "the pressure from both businessmen and wage earners" for tariffs restricting imports. His answer was that manufacturers must rely on "the excellence and low cost of our cars" to beat competition, rather than on tariffs.¹⁴

ATTITUDE OF LABOR AND CAPITAL

President Coolidge believed in what he called "the American system of partners in industry," not in the "foreign system of servants...Healthy and normal employment consists of a person or a company serving another for...a profit and to mutual satisfaction."¹⁵

Concerning labor unions he wrote: "The general quality of their leadership is improving...The old theory of reducing hours and output in order to increase wages and prices has generally been abandoned. It defeats itself by limiting sales. Helped by machinery, labor has increased production which ...increased both wages and profits while reducing prices. This benefits everybody and is a process that has no ascertainable limits."¹⁶

"Our ideal is not cheapness in either goods or men. The country is most benefited by a business profit secured through a fair price for commodities and high wages for labor. We expect science and invention to decrease production costs..."¹⁷

Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin Roosevelt believed that businessmen and labor are intelligent enough to solve problems in harmony if encouraged to do so by higher authority, provided there is a

thorough and mutual understanding of the issues. Probably President Coolidge should have been more active in providing leadership and encouragement from his office and the labor department for industrial and labor cooperation.¹⁸

The desirability and need for labor and management to cooperate was stressed in November 1983 by Paul Volcker, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. He said we must "find ways for employees and bosses to work together for productivity gains."¹⁹ In discussing the fear of inflation, he said "both sides need to face questions of declining productivity and eroding competitiveness of the United States in worldwide business...For productivity gains...companies should get workers more involved, [using] profit-sharing plans, employee stock ownership deals and union members on corporate boards of directors." Calvin Coolidge surely thought along the same lines as Mr. Volcker.

FEDERAL BUDGET

President Coolidge firmly believed in a balanced budget. This is revealed in the following quotations from his annual State of the Union messages to Congress.

Financial stability is the first requisite of sound government... Upon that firm foundation rests the only hope of progress and prosperity...Without a Budget System there can be no fixed responsibility and no constructive scientific economy.²⁰

In his State of the Union message of December 3, 1925, President Coolidge said:

It is a fundamental principal of our country that the people are sovereign. While they recognize the undeniable authority of the state, they have established as its instrument a Government of limited powers. They hold inviolate in their own hands the jurisdiction over their own freedom and the ownership of their own property...The wealth of our country is not public wealth, but private wealth. It does not belong to the Government, it belongs to the people.

Because of conditions in 1925, he continued: "...Assuming new obligations ought to be postponed, unless they are reproductive capital investments or are such as are absolutely necessary at this time."²¹

Coolidge's phrase "reproductive capital investments" raises the very important question of what are the proper accounting principles that should be used in budget and actual expenditure reports. His point is that capital investments that produce income should be made if they will repay

the Treasury over a reasonable period of years. Coolidge believed the reports should divide cash outgo into a) current expenses and b) capital income producing expenditures.

In his sixth and final State of the Union message of December 4, 1928, he was alarmed that Congress was about to legislate expenditures greater than income; that would be an "unthinkable result...financial disgrace."²²

POST OFFICE

Interestingly, Coolidge did not regard the post office as part of the federal budget, believing that it was a business function. He referred to it as "outside" the governmental budget.²³ "The government has never shown much aptitude for real business. The Congress will not permit it [the post office] to be conducted by a competent executive, but constantly intervenes."²⁴

SOCIAL SECURITY TODAY

This author believes that Calvin Coolidge would have treated our present social security annuity payments to retired people just like an insurance company does, on a strictly actuarial basis. He would not have included in the budget the tax receipts or the payments to retirees. They would be in a separate account, even in an independent corporation. Income and outgo would have been set according to strict actuarial principles as an annuity. Including them in the government's budget distorts the whole picture.

On the other hand, if Congress decided to give money to poor people, such would not be tacked onto social security. It would be included in the government's budget as a free grant to dependents, so the picture would be clear to the taxpayers.

TAXATION AND EXPENDITURES

During the time period of 1920 to 1922, the country experienced an economic downturn. In the President's December 3, 1924 message he stated:

The depression that overtook business, the disaster experienced in agriculture, the lack of employment and the terrific shrinkage in all values which our country experienced in a most acute form in 1920, resulted in no small measure from the prohibitive taxes which were then levied on all productive effort. The establishment of a system of drastic economy in public expenditure, which has enabled us to pay off about one-fifth of the national debt since 1919, and almost cut in two the national tax burden since 1921, has been one of the main

causes in reestablishing a prosperity...Economy reaches everywhere. It carries a blessing to everybody.

The fallacy of the claim that the costs of government are borne by the rich cannot be too often exposed. No system has been devised, I do not think any system could be devised, under which any person living in this country could escape being affected by the cost of our government. It has a direct effect both upon the rate and the purchasing power of wages. It is felt in the price of those prime necessities of existence, food, clothing, fuel and shelter. It would appear to be elementary that the more Government expends the more it must require every producer to contribute out of his production to the Public Treasury, and the less he will have for his own benefit. The continuing costs of public administration can be met in only one way--by the work of the people. The higher they become, the more the people must work for the Government. The less they are, the more the people can work for themselves.²⁵

In Coolidge's inaugural address of March 4, 1925, he stated: "This administration has come into power with a very clear and definite mandate from the people...the policy that stands out with the greatest clearness is that of economy in public expenditure with reduction and reform of taxation."²⁶

No matter what others may want, these people want a drastic economy. They are opposed to waste. They know that extravagance lengthens the hours and diminishes the rewards of their labor. I favor the policy of economy, *not because I wish to save money, but I wish to save people.* [author's emphasis] The men and women of this country who toil are the ones who bear the cost of the Government. Every dollar that we prudently save means that their life will be so much the more abundant. Economy is idealism in its most practical form.²⁷

In his annual message of December 8, 1925, he added the following:

After all, there is but a fixed quantity of wealth in this country at any fixed time. The only way that we can all secure more of it is to create more. The element of time enters into production. If the people have sufficient moderation and contentment to be willing to improve their condition by the process of enlarging production, eliminating waste, and distributing equitably, a prosperity almost without limit lies before us. If the people are to be dominated by selfishness, seeking immediate riches by nonproductive speculation and by wasteful quarreling over the returns from industry, they will be confronted by the inevitable results of depression and privation. If they will continue industrious and thrifty, contented with fair wages and moderate

profits, and the returns which accrue from the development of our natural resources, our prosperity will extend itself indefinitely.²⁸

The Revenue Act of 1926 cut personal income taxes 10% and one third of the people who previously paid taxes did not have to pay any at all. Corporate taxes were raised slightly. The net effect was that the federal revenue was reduced 10% for 1926. This savings went into productive investments to produce more business and more income taxes at the lower tax rates.²⁹

Calvin Coolidge promised future tax rate cuts "as the debt is reduced, as the business of the country expands and revenue increases."³⁰ He knew that the incentive to establish new businesses and to expand could be killed by too high tax rates. He was proved correct by actual events as business increased and federal debt was decreased.

President Coolidge was very leery of permanent increases in expenditures. He wrote, "We can make a capital expenditure...and when that expenditure is made it is over with. But expenditures that call for increases that go on indefinitely from year to year...come in for different consideration and different treatment."³¹ The author believes that today part of our federal financial trouble stems from permanent built-in increases in many of our programs to pay money to individuals, such as social security, military pensions, medical aid, welfare assistance, etc. They are referred to as "entitlements." The time has come to face this issue. Our best course would be to follow Coolidge's policy of restricting expenditures until business expands and produces sufficient income to carry the load.

LOCALIZE TAXES AND EXPENDITURES

Tax collections and expenditures should be made by the unit of government that is as close to the people's local control as possible. Calvin Coolidge wrote that every level of "government should spend its own money. Otherwise the appropriating agency has no control over the disbursing agency..."³² When the federal government makes grants to states and cities to spend, control can be exercised only by federal regulations which become very expensive "red tape." Furthermore, there is a distinct tendency toward extravagance by local officials and citizens to say "spend it; it doesn't cost us anything." The sad fact is about 20% of the collected taxes are spent in administering the process of allocation back to the local units.

President Coolidge once observed that the temptation to spend the public money is almost irresistible. Therefore, it is best to control taxes and expenditures as locally as possible so the people may watch the process. In private business, there are expense and profit control centers which are

about equivalent to local units of government. In business these centers help to keep productivity ahead of expenditures. Coolidge believed in limited functions for the federal government, leaving local governments and private citizens and private business responsible for functions which they can well perform.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Debate continues as to the causes of the recession that began in late 1929 and then deepened into the Great Depression of the 1930's, and which did not really end until World War II. The purpose here is not to analyze the causes of the Great Depression, but certainly the huge destruction of property, the millions of dead and wounded on both sides, and the colossal crushing debt resulting from World War I were contributing causes. Also, there had been unreasonable extension of credit which resulted in greatly inflated prices which eventually collapsed.

Common stocks could be purchased for 10% in cash with 90% borrowed funds. The Dow Jones measure of stock prices rose from 160 in 1926-27, to 300 in late 1928, to 380 in mid-1929, and dropped to 180 one year later in mid-1930. When asked about these broker loans, Coolidge said he left those matters to the Federal Reserve System and the banks as the experts, but he added: "If I were to give my own personal opinion about it, I should say that any loan made for gambling in stocks was an 'excessive loan'."³³ This shows that Coolidge had the right idea, and it is too bad that he did not express his sound fears to the banks and Federal Reserve; he did respect the independence of the Fed as established by law.

Providing for People's Needs

In May of 1931, former President Coolidge said that the responsibility of business is to "take care of employees in preference to stockholders... wage earners hold a preferred position..."³⁴ "Our property must support our population. Saving people is more important than saving money... Property...will be worth more in the future if it is used to help those who need it now."³⁵

He believed in maintaining the purchasing power of the people, when he wrote in 1931, "fear of...loss of income...is paralyzing the usual flow of business and results in the vicious circle of smaller sales, less people employed and decreased buying power." He was very pleased when many large employers announced in 1931 that they would "break the circle by ceasing any present discharges." Of course, he knew companies could not continue that if sales did not pick up so he hoped employees would "(resume) normal expenditures."³⁶

Borrowing for the Relief of People

President Coolidge believed that productive and efficient business is the only continuing source of well-being and prosperity of the people.³⁷ However, he fully recognized that a recession "calls for the expenditure of money to save people." Writing in December, 1930, he noted that the federal government needed more money to meet "new commitments for relief." However, he was against more taxes as they will retard business. So he favored "temporary borrowing to meet temporary emergency. The danger there is extravagance."³⁸

Unemployment Compensation

In 1930 former President Coolidge wrote that discharged employees and the depression are "a vicious circle...When a few are laid off, the rest fear that they may be next. That feeling contracts the usual amount of purchases...Then there come more discharges...There is a paralysis of fear...That is one reason why savings in bank deposits have increased (in 1930) and consumption has diminished."³⁹ "This is paralyzing the usual flow of commodities and results in...smaller sales, less people employed and decreased buying power."⁴⁰

Some of Coolidge's associates also definitely had in mind the need for protecting the purchasing power of the population during periods of unemployment. For example, Herbert Hoover, who served as Secretary of Commerce for Presidents Harding and Coolidge from 1921 to 1929, wrote to Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, on October 23, 1920, as follows: "unemployment and sickness are the curse of the individual worker...An increase in production of five to 30 percent could be obtained if the mental attitude of the worker toward his work could be enlisted and realigned and if...strikes and lockouts could be minimized...if cooperation is...set up between the employer and employee...the increased production resulting from joint action could be allocated...to a joint insurance [fund] for unemployment and sickness...such a collective bargain could be entered into voluntarily by each industry."⁴¹

Unfortunately action was not taken on an unemployment plan until 1935 during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Federal and state laws enacted taxes for the benefit of unemployed workers. No doubt about it these benefits have helped to maintain some purchasing power during recessions which is what Calvin Coolidge had in mind. Coolidge believed firmly in private business, but he wrote in 1931 that during prolonged prosperity "excessive individualism was apparent... We are entering the second phase where men...realize that they need the

help of each other and that salvation must be sought in helping each other. When people work together nothing is impossible."⁴² It is too bad voluntary collective bargaining could not have established industry funds well prior to 1930 for the protection of the unemployed and ill to whom President Hoover referred. The Great Depression engulfed all possible private industry thoughts along this line and a government plan became necessary. The country did not have an unemployment compensation system prior to 1935. Coolidge had long advocated it and in December, 1930, wrote of the need for an unemployment compensation system to help sustain purchasing power in a recession. He said: "The duty to relieve unemployment is plain..." He likened unemployment compensation to the system of workmen's compensation for injured employees.⁴³

WORKING FOR WORLD PEACE

League of Nations

With World War I ending on November 11, 1918, there were three major international subjects: The League of Nations, The World Court, and Disarmament. President Coolidge stated his general policy in his first State of the Union message to Congress on December 6, 1923, as follows:

Our country has one cardinal principle to maintain in its foreign policy. It is an American principle. It must be an American policy. We attend to our own affairs, conserve our own strength, and protect the interests of our own citizens; but we recognize thoroughly our obligation to help others, reserving to the decision of our own judgment the time, the place and the method. We realize the common bond of humanity. We know the inescapable law of service.

Our country has definitely refused to adopt and ratify the covenant of the League of Nations. We have not felt warranted in assuming the responsibilities which its members have assumed. I am not proposing any change in this policy; neither is the Senate. The incident, so far as we are concerned, is closed. The League exists as a foreign agency. We hope it will be helpful. But the United States sees no reason to limit its own freedom and independence of action by joining it. We shall do well to recognize this basic fact in all national affairs and govern ourselves accordingly.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the League was not successful in preserving the peace with the outbreak of World War II in September of 1939. Also, it could not prevent Italy's invasion of Ethiopia earlier. Whether United States membership would have changed the course of events is doubtful.

World Court

President Coolidge's December 6, 1923 message continued:

Our foreign policy has always been guided by two principles. The one is the avoidance of permanent political alliances which would sacrifice our proper independence. The other is the peaceful settlement of controversies between nations. By example and by treaty we have advocated arbitration. For nearly 25 years we have been a member of The Hague Tribunal, and have long sought the creation of a permanent World Court of Justice. I am in full accord with both of these policies. I favor the establishment of such a court intended to include the whole world. That is, and has long been, an American policy.⁴⁵

Treaty to Outlaw War

President Coolidge and his second Secretary of State, Frank B. Kellogg, worked for a worldwide treaty that would outlaw aggressive war as an instrument of national policy. On April 6, 1927, France proposed a treaty to outlaw war. On December 28, 1927, Secretary Kellogg suggested that all major powers sign. Germany, the United States, Belgium, France, Great Britain, India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State, Italy, Japan, Poland, and Czechoslovakia signed; ultimately 63 countries signed or adhered. The treaty provided:

Article I: The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

Article II: The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.

Article III: The present Treaty shall be ratified by the High Contracting Parties named in the Preamble in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements, and shall take effect as between them as soon as all their several instruments of ratification shall have been deposited at Washington.⁴⁶

In his final message to Congress on December 4, 1928, President Coolidge said:

One of the most important treaties ever laid before the Senate of the United States will be that which the 15 nations recently signed at Paris, and to which 44 other nations have declared their intention to adhere, renouncing war as a national policy and agreeing to resort

only to peaceful means for the adjustment of international differences. It is the most solemn declaration against war, the most positive adherence to peace, that it is possible for sovereign nations to make. It does not supersede our inalienable sovereign right and duty of national defense or undertake to commit us before the event to any mode of action which the Congress might decide to be wise if ever the treaty should be broken. But it is a new standard in the world around which can rally the informed and enlightened opinion of nations to prevent their governments from being forced into hostile action by the temporary outbreak of international animosities. The observance of this covenant, so simple and so straight-forward, promises more for the peace of the world than any other agreement ever negotiated among the nations.⁴⁷

The Senate consented to this treaty on January 15, 1929. On July 24, 1929, President Herbert Hoover welcomed former President Coolidge to the formal signing ceremonies in Washington.

By January 1933 Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany and the world was on its way to World War II. This shows that solemn treaties are easily broken. President Roosevelt, in 1945, said there must be available power to enforce peace. Perhaps there was the power in 1933 to the 1939 outbreak of World War II to have stopped Hitler, but there was not the *will to enforce peace*. Winston Churchill said there never was a more *avoidable war* if only there had been the *will to stop it*.

Disarmament

In speaking of the U.S. and worldwide financial and political troubles of the late 1920's and early 1930's, President Coolidge wrote: "Back of these difficulties lies the World War. [1914-1918 for Europe and 1917-1918 for the U.S.]...War ruins all participants, victors and vanquished alike...The financial burdens were more than people can bear."⁴⁸ He referred in particular to the impossible war reparations demanded of Germany. (Note: Hitler rode to power in 1933 partially on the issue of reparations and the earlier disastrous inflation).

Coolidge sadly noted that over the decades "nations have made numerous agreements...for peace and then turned their attention to preparation for war...The world is arming more heavily than before the war [World War II]."⁴⁹ "National pride is the main difficulty."⁵⁰ Just like 1992, the world needed fewer weapons, not more.

National Defense

President Coolidge still believed in adequate military defense. He wrote: "Human nature takes things for granted...We forget that the constant effort and care...are needed;...the peace we enjoy still has in it a large element of preparation for national defense. No self-respecting people desiring to live under a reign of law at home and abroad can afford to neglect their army. Public security depends to a large extent on the knowledge that the government has the power to enforce its decrees."⁵¹

President Coolidge stated his basic policy on defense in his message to Congress on December 6, 1923, as follows:

For several years we have been decreasing the personnel of the Army and Navy, and reducing their power to the danger point. Further reductions should not be made. The Army is a guarantee of the security of our citizens at home; the Navy is a guarantee of the security of our citizens abroad. Both of these services should be strengthened rather than weakened. Additional planes are needed for the Army, and additional submarines for the Navy. The defenses of Panama must be perfected. We want no more competitive armaments. We want no more war. But we want no weakness that invites imposition. A people who neglect their national defense are putting in jeopardy their national honor."⁵²

In this connection, it is interesting to note what President Franklin D. Roosevelt said as World War II was coming to its end in early 1945. He often stated that peace, like war, can succeed only where there is a will to enforce it, and where there is available power to enforce it.

As part of his defense policy, President Coolidge stated in his third message to Congress: "A sound selective service act giving broad authority for the mobilization in time of peril of all the resources of the country, both persons and materials, is needed to perfect our defensive policy in accordance with our ideals of equality..."⁵³ Such legislation was not enacted until 1940 when President Roosevelt secured a selective service law; a year later its extension passed by a margin of only one vote in the House. World War II was already raging in Europe.

United Europe

Calvin Coolidge foresaw a need for a federated Europe. He wrote: "Economic unity and political unity usually go together...Our own Union was founded on the necessity for an economic unity. Business Advantages came from a common law and common governmental responsibilities" over the vast continent that became the United States.⁵⁴ Coolidge favored

the 1930-31 proposal of the French Premier Briand for a "federated Europe as a rational plan for closer economic relations."⁵⁵ The efforts were not at all successful because of the onset of the Great Depression and then World War II.

I believe Coolidge would certainly have been in tune with what developed after World War II when the European Economic Community and the coal and steel community were established with the goal of greater strength for Europe in the world. And he would have favored the greater European unity of 1992!

THE PRESS-MEDIA

President Coolidge nearly always met twice each week, Tuesday and Friday, with newspaper reporters in the oval office. He relied on them to present to the public background information on the work of his administration, believing they were very effective.

He would discuss almost any question concerning his work, but he required questions to be submitted in writing in advance and he chose in advance only those he would answer. Today, the media would not like that procedure as it would deny them the considerable limelight they receive by springing questions on the President. Also, today they would say that the President is hiding from the public. Reporters had very thorough, lengthy, intimate dialogues with him and arrived at a mutual understanding of the factors involved in complex problems, which they then presented to their readers.⁵⁶

It strikes me that Coolidge's press conference procedure was better than today's where scores of media people loudly shout for the President's recognition to ask a question. Often they are loaded, tricky questions. I ask: Why should a President be expected to answer offhand complex questions when the whole world hangs on his every word and often misinterprets what he said? What is wrong with President Coolidge's procedure?

Many journalists have become television exhibitionists, trying to feature or create the most exciting bits of news in order to raise their station's rating and share of audience. Richard L. Strout, the long-time Washington reporter and columnist for the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New Republic*, said in April of 1983 in *Time* that he preferred the days before TV turned reporters into "celebrity journalists."

Nobody wants to ignore TV and the opportunity it gives people to see the President meeting with the media in this fast-moving world. However, it would be more helpful to the public for reporters to return to the more thoughtful *intimate dialogues* with a President and to stop striving for *celebrity status*. President Coolidge observed: "When something is

unusually bad, it becomes...news; by the same principle when something is good it is at least worthy of comment." ⁵⁷ "The press...ought to treat [officials] with respect and consideration. We cannot promote good government by constantly assaulting [the officials]." ⁵⁸

Surveys estimate that 80% of the people get all their knowledge of the news from TV. Certainly the public welfare is promoted by teamwork between the media and government officials in presenting unbiased, constructive news. In his *Autobiography*, Calvin Coolidge said: "The words of the President have an enormous weight and ought not to be used indiscriminately." Hence his policy of nearly always requiring questions in writing in advance so that he could give a thorough answer.

WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN POLITICS

In light of women's activities today in all fields, it is hard to believe that it was not until 1920 that women were allowed to vote in all states in national elections. In that year the XIXth amendment to the Constitution was adopted.

Coolidge wrote in 1930 "that while women are not eager for public office they do administer it successfully" when elected. They have "very considerable influence on party platforms and governmental policy, especially on the humane and social welfare sides...They are still the homemakers. They look to the future. They think of conditions not only for themselves but for their posterity...They are devoted, steadfast, sensible...Nothing can be safer for the [country] than the informed judgment of the mothers of the land." ⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that President Coolidge appointed Mabel Walker Wildebrandt to the office of Assistant Attorney General of the U.S. so soon after 1920. When she criticized some federal district attorneys for inaction, she was supported by the remark of Coolidge's "keep plugging away at 'em." ⁶⁰

"During his Presidency Coolidge was often in touch with black leaders such as Dr. Robert R. Moton, the principal of Tuskegee Institute; James Weldon Johnson, the secretary of the N.A.A.C.P.; and William Monroe Trotter, the corresponding secretary of the National Equal Rights League. All frequently made suggestions but with only occasional results such as the appointment of W.T. Francis as Minister for Liberia...Coolidge's 1925 American Legion address was a sincere effort in moral leadership." ⁶¹ To quote from the address:

The generally expressed desire of 'America first' can not be criticized. It is a perfectly correct aspiration for our people to cherish.

But the problem which we have to solve is how to make America first. It can not be done by the cultivation of national bigotry, arrogance, or selfishness. Hatreds, jealousies, and suspicions will not be productive of any benefits in this direction. Here again we must apply the rule of toleration." ⁶²

MODEST LIVING

President Coolidge lived modestly and saved his money. He and Mrs. Coolidge established their home in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1906. It was a "rental half of a duplex at 21 Massasoit Street for \$28 a month. It was to this rental home that they were to return in March of 1929 after living in the White House." ⁶³ This house was right on the sidewalk, which gave him no privacy when he sat on the front porch. He later moved to a larger, more secluded home. Contrast this with the lavish retirement homes of recent Presidents (except for President Truman).

PERSISTENCE

Throughout his life Calvin Coolidge worked hard. In 1932, in the midst of the depression, he gave the following advice:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not, nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not, unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan "press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.

This author believes what the American people need today, in 1992, is to work even harder and practice self-reliance.

Howard M. Packard is the retired president and chairman of SC Johnson Wax, a world-wide company founded in 1886 in Racine, Wisconsin. He became treasurer in 1946 and served as an executive for the company until retirement in 1976. He was a director from 1955 to 1977. Mr. Packard has also served on the boards of Kemper Insurance Financial Corporation, Wisconsin Telephone, Universal Foods, Marshall Field and Co., and the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. He is a graduate of Northwestern University and George Washington Law School and received a L.L.D. from Lawrence University. He served as a Lt. Cmdr. in the Navy in World War II. He was born in 1910 in Pasadena, California.

NOTES

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15. August 1 and January 5, 1931.
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17. August 27.
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22. p. 124.
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24. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1931.
25. Philip R. Moran, ed., *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 49.
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31. *Ibid.*, p. 306.
32. Edward C. Lathem, ed., *Calvin Coolidge Says*, December 5, 1930.
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37. January 17, 1931.
38. December 9, 1930.
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40. August 16, 1930.
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43. December 23, 1930.
44. Philip R. Moran, ed., *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 33.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
46. pp. 121-122.
47. *Loc. cit.*
48. Edward C. Lathem, ed., *Calvin Coolidge Says*, June 27, 1931.
49. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1931.
50. January 21, 1931.
51. April 4, 1931.
52. Philip R. Moran, ed., *Calvin Coolidge*, pp. 41-42.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
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55. *Loc. cit.*
56. Howard H. Quint and Robert H. Ferrell, eds., *The Talkative President: The Off-the-Record Press Conference of Calvin Coolidge*, (Amherst, Mass., 1964), *passim*.
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Book Reviews

Harry S. Truman, *Where the Buck Stops: The Personal and Private Writings of Harry S. Truman*

Edited by Margaret Truman

(New York, NY: Warner Books, 1989) 388 pp, \$22.96 (hardback), \$12.95 (paperback)

It is not often that a new book appears by a man who passed from the scene twenty years ago. Mr. Truman willed, though, that publication of this book be delayed until both he and Mrs. Truman had passed away. He believed that only after death could he be completely frank. Such consideration, perverse in a way, is refreshing.

Equally welcome is the president's prose: crisp, clear, and concise. It falls somewhere between that of his conversational memoir, *Mr. Citizen*, and the candid dialogue in some of his other writings. Throughout these pages one can hear the flat, folksy delivery, and one can see the twinkle in the eye behind thick spectacles. Indeed, one senses that this book could have been assembled from dinner-table lectures (much of it *was* dictated), and one speculates more and more that the author missed his calling. The man who wrote this engaging book would have made an inspiring history teacher.

Readers of *The Real Calvin Coolidge* will be interested in this book because of its chapter, "Harding and Coolidge," placed early in the section entitled "Some Presidents We Could Have Done Without." Mr. Truman makes his disdain for President Harding quite clear, aptly summarizing the Teapot Dome scandal.

Mr. Truman's assessment of President Coolidge, though, is not easily guessed. After all, Mr. Truman had a famous friendship with Herbert Hoover, but he openly disliked Dwight D. Eisenhower. Truman, Coolidge, Hoover, and Eisenhower were all small-town men, well-read and patriotic. Hoover was, by all accounts, amiable enough, if aloof at times, and one surmises that the reason Harry and Ike never got along is because they were too much alike. They grew up a few miles and years apart, read the same books, but reached different conclusions. Harry thought Ike got too big for his britches, and Ike thought Harry was out of place. Coolidge, though, eldest of the four and the only one not from the Midwest, is the unknown element here. As with Hoover, it turns out that Truman came to respect Coolidge the man but disagreed with Coolidge the President: "He was quite a character, and there are a lot of funny stories about him, but I guess pretty nearly the only thing I like about him are those stories." (p. 43) Mr. Truman does give a brief, slanted, account of Coolidge's presidency, and he includes his favorite "funny stories" about Coolidge. There are a few factual errors, such as describing then Governor Coolidge's telegram to Samuel Gompers as "only one line long" (p. 47) and

reducing Coolidge's height by an inch (p. 78), but such points do not detract from the importance of one chief executive's evaluation of another.

As its title implies, this book is about the American presidency, its powers and duties, and how the various presidents have exercised them. To a Coolidgean, it is a provocative but interesting book, displaying personal yet serious study of the subject by one who held the office. This research dusts off unjustly forgotten presidents, such as James K. Polk, and it reminds the reader of some more obscure facts, such as Ulysses S. Grant's *ad interim* appointment as Andrew Johnson's secretary of war. The editing is not distracting; footnotes are mainly explanatory and kept to a minimum. One could complain that daughter Margaret's deletion of her father's use of the word "Negro" was a bit too cautious. Robert H. Ferrell's edition of the letters in *Dear Bess* let a far worse word stand. For, above all, this book, like the man, is honest, at times blunt. Occasionally the homey style approaches self-parody. "The establishment of the freedom of the press in this country was a precedent and had just about never been done before anywhere in the world, and some of the editors of the time were small men and went haywire on the subject." (p. 50)

Each chapter could stand as an essay, and chapter 24, "The Constitution--Stretched or Broken?", addresses the essential question of the presidency. What should be the role of the chief executive under Article II? Mr. Truman favors an active role, his ideal president is something of a legislator and "hands-on" manager. Here are echoes of Woodrow Wilson's admiration of parliamentary government. Coolidge believed otherwise; to him the president was an administrator, an executor, of the public trust. Mr. Truman despised this ideal of executive restraint, expressing it with a sneer in the word "normalcy," which to him meant sloth. After damning Harding for this vice, Truman declared:

Coolidge...was equally indifferent to what his powers were and what he could do in that Oval Office. But fortunately people finally get tired of that sort of thing just as they get tired of a man who exercises too much power, and then there's change and maybe another change and sooner or later we get someone who tries to get some things accomplished. (p. 237)

At first glance, this assertion seems to convey Coolidge's belief in the individual citizen's ability eventually to see the truth and act upon it. Studied again, this statement contains an anger and a fatalism quite unlike Coolidge's calm, Calvinistic faith in the benevolent plan of Providence.

Mr. Truman defines "a leader in a free country" as "a man who can persuade people to do what they don't want to do, or do what they're too lazy to do, and like it." (p. 99) One wonders what he meant by "a free

country," for such a leader surely sees his fellow citizens as mere bovine herds to be driven. The Coolidgean ideal of leadership is found in remarks from 1922 on Alexander Hamilton.

The great man is he who can express the unuttered opinions of his time, direct energy along profitable channels, divine the spirit of the people, and unify action under just and stable institutions of government.

At once one senses Coolidge's positive perspective; although he was not a Freemason, he saw his fellow man as his brother. Leaders, he believed, represent their countrymen. Significantly, Coolidge's sarcastic biographer, William Allen White, in *Masks in A Pageant*, conceded that Coolidge "represented the spirit of the times, the aspirations of his people... (He) was the symbol of all that was precious in the popular heart." But White, an old Bull Mooser who gave his idiosyncratic endorsement to the New Deal, concluded Coolidge "had no quality of leadership." One is at a loss to see how men such as Truman and White, rural Middle American populists, could see no mark of leadership in a democratically elected man who embodied the spirit of the age.

Truman and Coolidge can be seen as representatives of two answers to the question of the president's role. There are, of course, other examples, some who were not president—Robert A. Taft, Adlai Stevenson—others who were (William McKinley, Franklin D. Roosevelt). In his autobiography Senator George Wharton Pepper said, "(it) is too soon to determine which of two types of President the American people will finally prefer." Finality on any question is unlikely—indeed, unhealthy—in a republic, but books such as *Where the Buck Stops* should at least cause citizens to consider constitutional questions. Inasmuch as that was Mr. Truman's intention with this book, he has succeeded in serving the country even from beyond the tomb.

Upon closing this volume, one can conclude that Truman's overriding fault is his most endearing quality, his absolutism. He was convinced that his way, arrived at via long thought and study, was the only right way. Consequently, his assessment of one such as Coolidge is both partisan and self-righteous. One would not mind either trait so much were there any indication that Mr. Truman recognized that such a man was not lazy, as he averred, but held principles very different from his own. In the end, admirers of President Coolidge can say about the author of this good book, "He was quite a character, and there are a lot of funny stories about him..."

Review by Daniel J. Heisey

A longtime member of the Coolidge Foundation, Mr. Heisey is a Republican committeeman for his home precinct and deputy recorder of deeds for Cumberland County, PA. He has a B.A. from Dickinson College.

Eliot Asinof, *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* (New York, New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1990) 365 pp, \$21.95.

The best known of Eliot Asinof's dozen books is *Eight Men Out*, a thorough history of the 1919 Black Sox scandal (recently made into a movie). The year 1919 is when the author was born. The two events must have drawn Asinof to write his narrative of "a pivotal year in American history."

Other events of 1919 recounted in the book were President Woodrow Wilson's unsuccessful struggle to persuade Americans to support the League of Nations, labor unrest, including the Boston police strike, the era's Red Scare, and the efforts of the time—which culminated the next year—to pass constitutional amendments ensuring prohibition and the right of women to vote. In a jazzy, entertaining style Asinof points out the effect of all these happenings on our own era.

This period has been covered before, notably in William Klingaman's *1919*. Other than a few accounts in magazines and newspapers, Asinof used secondary sources. The pitfalls of this method are shown by the author's treatment of Calvin Coolidge in Part Two, Chapter Three.

The title of this chapter sets out the author's attitude: "The Trashing of the Boston Police Strike, or How to Become President of the United States by Leaving Town during a Crisis." This should be no surprise, considering Asinof's main sources—William Allen White's *A Puritan in Babylon* and Francis Russell's *A City in Terror*. The author seems to follow Russell's detailed account and adopts Russell's animosity toward Coolidge. Among the adjectives, some of them Russell's, he uses to produce a negative portrait of Coolidge are vapid, tense, strange, tight-lipped, reclusive, dour and forbidding, spineless, mediocre, dull, pedestrian, unobtrusive, and uninspired.

One can argue that Coolidge took no action to prevent the strike and backed the intransigent city police commissioner, Edwin U. Curtis for too long. Coolidge later admitted in his *Autobiography* that he should have acted sooner in calling out the state's National Guard. Whatever the governor's lapses, Asinof places more blame for the whole affair on Coolidge than on the proper target, Curtis.

A few inaccuracies about Coolidge appear. One is that he began his political career by running for mayor of Northampton. Another that he was a teetotaler. Another that he was elected mayor largely because the ardent prohibitionist, Wayne Wheeler, was on his side.

Asinof's point of view is attractive in parts of the book, particularly the sections on the Red Scare. The author shows originality in the narrative of events of 1919 and in his conclusion about the importance of that year for "the American psyche." But his dependence on overused adjectives to describe Governor Coolidge, and occasional misstatements about the governor's career, call into question the care with which he writes.

Review by J.R. Greene

J.R. Greene has been a member of the Foundation since 1985. An ardent collector of Coolidge memorabilia, he is author of *Calvin Coolidge: A Biography in Picture Postcards* (1987), *A Bibliography of Pamphlets* relating to Calvin Coolidge (1989), and other books on historical subjects. He is working on a bibliography of periodical articles about Coolidge.

Addendum:

No word is born shrinkproof. The older meaning of *meat* was "food," of *liquor* "drink," and of *corn* "grain." *To starve* did not necessarily mean to lack these items. Early in its life, *starve* meant "to perish." A *hound* was originally "a dog," a *fowl* "a bird," and a *deer* "any small animal," as seen in Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "But mice and rats and such small deer/Have been Tom's food for seven long year." Originally the title *doctor* was given to anyone skilled in a learned profession. An *undertaker* once could undertake to do anything; nowadays undertakers specifically undertake to manage funerals. Incredibly, a *girl* once could be a boy, as during the Middle English period *girl* was a unisex word denoting any child or youth.

Business started out as a general term meaning literally "busy-ness; one's proper concern." After a couple of centuries of life, *business* picked up the narrower meaning of "commercial dealings." In 1925 Calvin Coolidge used the word in both its generalized and specialized senses when he stated, "The chief business of the American people is business." We today can see the word starting to generalize back to its first meaning in phrases like "I don't like this funny business one bit."

NOTE: Excerpt from *Crazy English* by Richard Lederer, Pocket Books, 1989, Page 184.

The following articles were reprinted from *Good Housekeeping*. 1935.

Championing The Negro

by JOHN G. SARGENT

Lawyer and Former Attorney General of the United States

My experience with and knowledge of Calvin Coolidge is a composite of him as a boy, a young man, a man in middle life, the matured President of the United States, and thereafter until his death.

To me, the outstanding characteristics of the boy and man were absolute lack of duplicity; his capacity and determination to know and understand all that was to be known concerning any matter upon which he was called to act; his almost uncanny judgment of men; his unswerving purpose to administer, and himself to follow and obey, the law; and his kindly thoughtfulness and remembrance of every one, no matter how humble, who touched his life.

He seldom interfered with, and usually acted upon, the judgment and recommendation of Department heads; when some question would be raised, he sifted it to the bottom. I remember, once in the early part of my service, he said to me,

"Why don't you have more to say in Cabinet meetings: tell them what you are doing, bring up matters for discussion?"

I answered him that in the work of the Department of Justice, I found few matters connected with those of the other Departments, outside of determination of legal questions; and that in those things I consulted with the Department interested as to the facts, and undertook to advise as to the law; that, as to any matters of policy in which I might have doubts, I thought it better to discuss them with him and give him my views, and if he desired any further discussion with, or advice from, the Cabinet, he could have the matter brought up.

He reflected for a few minutes and said: "Well, I guess you are right."

He never afterward referred to the subject, but did occasionally bring up for discussion matters I had laid before him. His usual way of closing such discussions was to ask, "What is the law?" And, after a statement of it, to say, "Well, follow it."

From time to time the President was much troubled by the insistent discrimination by white employees against the colored people employed in the Department--such, for instance, as insistence that they would not work in the same room, at the same kind of work.

On one occasion some outburst on the subject that had occurred in one of his divisions was brought up by a Cabinet officer. After a general discussion the President said:

"Well, I don't know what you can do, or how you will solve the question, but to me it seems a terrible thing for persons of intelligence, of education, of real character--as we know many colored people are--to be deprived of a chance to work because they happen to be born with a different colored skin. I think you ought to find a way to give them an even chance."

The last trait of his character which I named--remembrance of and fondness for early associates--is probably emphasized in my experience with him, because he and I happened to form a link in Washington, about the only one there, between his youth and the life of vast responsibilities he was then living. Many was the time Mrs. Sargent and I were called to the White House for an evening when the only thing he apparently wanted of us was to inquire about and reminisce upon the people and affairs of Plymouth, Ludlow, Windsor County, and Vermont, when we were young; and what those people were doing now.

Mrs. Sargent, being younger than I, was nearer Mr. Coolidge's age and so had been considerably better acquainted with him during his boyhood at Black River Academy. He appeared particularly to enjoy her fund of stories and reminiscences of quaint Vermont characters and of incidents of his school life.

It is, I think, almost impossible for any one who has not seen it to realize the difficulty of maintaining in the White House the simplicity of a private home. The Coolidge family did it. There he was Father and Papa; Mrs. Coolidge was Mamma, and the boy was John. Each was solicitous for, and looked after, the comfort and needs of the others and of guests, personally showing them to their rooms, looking to see that everything needed was in order, in every way acting as if the visitor was in the farmhouse in Plymouth, the little house in Northampton, or any other plain American home.

"He was my friend, faithful and just to me."

*John Garibaldi Sargent (1860-1939), born in Ludlow, Vermont, had graduated from Tufts College in 1887, where he was known as "Jumbo" on the football team, and was admitted to the bar in 1890. He had practiced law in Ludlow and had been Attorney General of Vermont from 1908 to 1912. Tall, ungainly, and picturesque, Mr. Sargent was a first-class country lawyer, and turned out to be a competent Attorney General of the United States.

As a matter of fact, Coolidge was entirely satisfied with Sargent, who had preceded him at Black River Academy and who was known to everybody in the Plymouth region as "Gary." He soon became popular in Washington, where everybody recognized his shambling gait and careless dress. The truth is that

Sargent, through his general practice in a country town, had acquired a wide knowledge of human nature which made him a first-class judge of men. Chief Justice Taft once said that the Department of Justice was in better shape under Sargent than at any time before within his knowledge.

Notes from pages 365 and 366 in: *The Man from Vermont, Calvin Coolidge* by Claude M. Fuess. Little Brown and Co., 1940.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

While General Sargent was our guest during his first weeks in Washington, the President invited Mr. and Mrs. John N. Willys and their young daughter Virginia to take lunch with us on their way to a school for girls where they were going in order to make arrangements for Virginia's entrance as a student.

At table Mrs. Willys told of Virginia's having written on a piece of paper some directions which were to guide her in proper deportment upon such an important occasion as a luncheon at the White House. As the car came up the driveway she had given her notes on etiquette a last look, torn up the paper, and thrown the pieces out of the car window.

As her mother recited this to us, it was evident that the child was uncomfortably embarrassed. At this point the Attorney General, a kindly, understanding expression upon his face, gave us all a lesson in tact. He turned to her and said:

"I am sorry that you tore up the paper. I should have liked to borrow it."



*President Coolidge preparing his spurs for a ride on horseback,
South Dakota in 1927*

Picture donated by John and Florence Coolidge

The Great Auto Fraud

by JOHN COOLIDGE

The Former President's Son; Railroad Clark, N. Y., N. H. & H. R. R.

While *Good Housekeeping* is publishing other articles written about my father by his associates and friends, I should like to add something in perhaps a lighter vein, relating a few amusing incidents of our family life.

Many familiar and oft-repeated stories, some of them based on fact, but many of them pure fiction, have grown up around my father's sense of humor, his frugality, and his terseness of speech. He came by these traits naturally. They were typical of the people among whom he was born and brought up. I suspect that he was just as amused as any one else at the tales, whether true or not, which were told about him in later years.

When my brother Calvin and I were young boys in grade school, Father procured a pair of copper-toed leather boots for us to wear in the winter. He had worn similar ones as a boy and could see no reason why we should object to them, even though our playmates did not wear them. Most important of all, they would last much longer than ordinary shoes. Although they had to be rubbed with oil and put behind the kitchen stove at night in order to keep them soft and pliable, Calvin and I endured them as best we could. It was a little too much, however, when the school-teachers did not allow us to play games inside the schoolhouse during a rainy recess period. We had to remain at our desks because we made such a noise running around with those clodhoppers on.

Mother bought for us one Hallowe'en jack-o'-lanterns made of papier-mache with candles in them. When Father saw these, he warned us to be careful lest they take fire. However, we heedlessly went right ahead, lighted one, and, regardless of drafts, placed it on the window sill in the front room. During the excitement we went off and forgot about it. When we returned, it was in flames.

Father had been there all the time, and had seen the jack-o'-lantern going up in smoke and scorching the window sill. But he made not a move to put the fire out. He wanted to impress upon us the danger of what we were doing. He succeeded. The charred window sill served as a lasting reminder.

Of course we boys were taught to be thrifty. We were told repeatedly that the best place for our money was in the bank. Calvin and I had a newspaper route, and our earnings went into a savings bank on the main street at home, only a short distance from Father's law office. We were walking by the bank with him late one afternoon when he stopped and told us to listen. There seemed to be nothing unusual to listen to, and doubtless our facial expressions gave clear evidence that we were puzzled. After an interval of silence, with our attention fixed for his next remark, he asked,

"Can you hear your money working for you?"

As a boy I enjoyed building automobiles. During a summer vacation I had partially completed one. Not being able to afford a long board, I had to build the chassis with two discarded tent poles and two pairs of old wheels which I had somehow collected. The steering gear was composed of a wheel fastened to one end of a broom handle; the other end was fixed to the inside front of the hood. Winding a rope around the broom handle underneath the hood and tying one end of the rope to each side of the front axle produced a very satisfactory steering arrangement. I had spent a considerable amount of painstaking labor on it, and I was proud of the result.

At that time Father was running for public office, as was his custom in the fall of the year, and a newspaper photographer called at our home one afternoon while Mother and I were out. As usually happens, the cameraman, I presume, wanted some "intimate" poses of the candidate; so it was suggested that Father and Calvin have their pictures taken with my automobile. The whole thing was entirely unbeknownst to Mother and me. Imagine my surprise and indignation when shortly afterward the picture appeared in the rotogravure section of a Sunday newspaper, showing Father and Calvin in the act of building *my* automobile! Father, in his shirt sleeves and vest, was using a saw on the auto--Calvin wielding a wooden mallet. I could hardly believe my eyes.

Although there was much of a humorous nature that took place in our family life, there were also serious moments aplenty. The teasing to which Father subjected me did not seem amusing at the time, but with the passing of the years I have come to see its laughable side, and I realize now that it was a form of relaxation for him. I derive a great deal of satisfaction from the thought that perhaps I was the means of helping him forget, for a short while at least, the cares of public office.

Father very often reproved us sharply, was impatient with our shortcomings, for life was a serious matter with him. His years of conscientious administration of the affairs of state made it difficult for him to understand the indiscretion and irresponsibility of youth, and he seemed to think that we should be able to reason as clearly as he could.

Father occasionally enjoyed teasing people who did not know or understand him, and who thought that he was always very dignified. This resulted in their completely misinterpreting his efforts to be amusing, which, of course, was just what he wanted. One such incident occurred in a railroad dining car. The colored waiter, knowing who Father was, hovered around his table continuously and was solicitous almost to the point of being obnoxious.

Finally he asked if everything was satisfactory. Father swiftly replied, "What did you think was wrong?"

This was such an unexpected answer that the waiter, mumbling and blinking, backed away completely nonplused.

After Father and Mother had returned to Northampton to live, my wife and I were spending a week-end with them. The minister who married us had returned to conduct the service in the church where he had been our pastor when my brother and I were boys, and Mrs. Coolidge and I attended the service. Father kept in the cellar a large supply of cigars, most of which had been given to him. That Sunday afternoon the minister came to call, and, as he was about to leave, Father, slyly implying that he had his cigars catalogued, remarked to his reverend guest,

"If you will wait a minute, I will get you a box of ministers' cigars."

I can not recall whether the brand reserved for the clergy was good, bad, or indifferent.

Thus did Father exhibit in our family circle some of the characteristics for which he became noted. Other traits, which were exemplified by his public life, can be set forth more adequately by his colleagues and contemporaries, who were in a position to appreciate their timeliness and effectiveness better than I. Perhaps only history's perspective will be able to fix them categorically.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

As a parent, Calvin Coolidge was a strict disciplinarian. He required and received prompt obedience. Yet he ruled by direction and precept rather than by force. It was seldom necessary for him to resort to punishment. Indeed, I can recall only one instance when it took the form of a good old-fashioned spanking administered with the back of a hairbrush.

His propensity for teasing was a natural trait which was handed down to him from his forebears. He could never get a great deal of satisfaction out of teasing Calvin, for his younger son entered into the spirit of it and enjoyed the encounter even more than his father did. But John was a more shy and sensitive child, and I could never get him to understand or adopt Calvin's method of outwitting his father. Occasionally John and I managed to turn the tables on his father, and we found that when he was the victim, the parent was even less amenable than the son.

The Rejected War Memorial

by JOHN J. PERSHING

General of the Armies of the United States; Former Commander-in-Chief, A.E.F.

The first time I met Mr. Coolidge was in Boston, when he was Governor of the State of Massachusetts. At that meeting not more than half a dozen words on either side were spoken, and of course I came away with the impression that he was not very talkative. But when he was Vice-President and later President, I saw him quite frequently; and on a number of occasions it was evident that my first impression had been wrong.

I had an interesting day visiting the Coolidges the summer they spent near Rapid City. After luncheon the President and I were together for nearly two hours, and during this time he spoke freely on a number of subjects, including that of his accepting the nomination for what was called a third term. Incidentally, he told me that he thought it would be a mistake. He did most of the talking and left me with an impression entirely different from the one I had got in Boston. I have rarely spent a more interesting afternoon.

I recall another occasion when, as Chairman of the Battle Monuments Commission, I took to the White House, then temporarily at the Patterson residence, the designs for the war memorials and chapels to be erected in Europe. I was the only guest, and after dinner the President, Mrs. Coolidge, and I adjourned to a reception room for an exhibition of the drawings. Mr. Coolidge lit a cigar and sat back to enjoy his smoke while I showed him and Mrs. Coolidge the drawings and explained the purpose of each one.

Mrs. Coolidge made frequent comments, one a very important criticism which caused a change in one of the designs. She likened a particular design to a guillotine. To my mind that condemned it, and the architect was requested to furnish a new one.

Mr. Coolidge said little, but what he said was always to the point. As I proceeded, he frequently asked the question,

"How much will that cost?"

In several instances he expressed the opinion that the estimate was too low, and as we proceeded with the construction, it turned out that he was right.

Mrs. Coolidge comments:

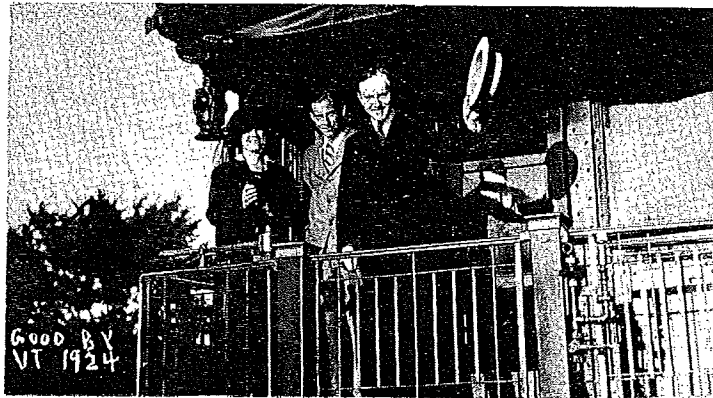
When I reflect upon my Washington career, I wonder how I ever faced it. I had been brought up very simply in a modest home where the amenities of social life were confined within narrow limits. After graduation from a coeducational university I had taught for three years in a school for the

deaf. As wife of a small-city mayor, my social obligations were of minor importance. The State of Massachusetts has no residence for her Chief Executive, and our financial status did not justify our setting up an establishment of our own in the capital city. Beyond attendance upon a few public functions and an occasional dinner, my participation was not required.

I can not recall that I had any particular qualms, however, when we advanced upon Washington, nor do I remember any moments of embarrassment. We were socially launched at a dinner and ball given on the night of President Harding's inauguration in the large town house of the Edward B. McLeans. Mrs. McLean had asked me to receive with her, and I stood by her side at the foot of the wide stairway in the reception hall, she resplendent in a gorgeous creation of brocaded white satin by Worth, I wearing a simple gown by a village dressmaker. It was all very gay, and I had a wonderful time.

I had thought that I should find it difficult to converse with dinner partners who, like General Pershing, had devoted their lives to careers of which I had little knowledge; but I soon found that they were human, and it required no effort to choose conversational topics of common interest. My training had been in the direction of avoiding subjects which dealt with matters in which public men were professionally engaged.

When General Pershing and I found ourselves seated next to each other at dinner, we invariably compared notes upon our boys, their schools, their interests, and their general welfare. It has been my experience that those who are truly great are the most simple people at heart, the most considerate and understanding, with a decided aversion to talking about themselves.



*Postcard of the Coolidge family leaving Vermont,
after the summer of 1924.*