

Coolidge Cup Declamation Qualifier

Official Speech Excerpt Packet

2022



Have Faith in Massachusetts (Excerpt)

Boston, Massachusetts / January 7, 1914

Honorable Senators:

The commonwealth is one. We are all members of one body. The welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together. Industry cannot flourish if labor languish. Transportation cannot prosper if manufactures decline. The general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act, but it is well to remember that the benefit of one is the benefit of all, and the neglect of one is the neglect of all. The suspension of one man's dividends is the suspension of another man's pay envelope.

Men do not make laws. They do but discover them. Laws must be justified by something more than the will of the majority. They must rest on the eternal foundation of righteousness. That state is most fortunate in its form of government which has the aptest instruments for the discovery of laws.

Courts are established, not to determine the popularity of a cause, but to adjudicate and enforce rights. No litigant should be required to submit his case to the hazard and expense of a political campaign. No judge should be required to seek or receive political rewards. The courts of Massachusetts are known and honored wherever men love justice. Let their glory suffer no diminution at our hands. The electorate and judiciary cannot combine. A hearing means a hearing. When the trial of causes goes outside the court room, Anglo Saxon constitutional government ends.

The people cannot look to legislation generally for success. Industry, thrift, character, are not conferred by act or resolve. Government cannot relieve from toil. It can provide no substitute for the rewards of service. It can, of course, care for the defective and recognize distinguished merit. The normal must care for themselves. Self-government means self-support.

Man is born into the universe with a personality that is his own. He has a right that is founded upon the constitution of the universe to have property that is his own. Ultimately, property rights and personal rights are the same thing. The one cannot be preserved if the other be violated. Each man is entitled to his rights and the rewards of his service be they never so large or never so small.

Have faith in Massachusetts. In some unimportant detail some other States may surpass her, but in the general results, there is no place on earth where the people secure, in a larger measure, the blessings of organized government, and nowhere can those functions more properly be termed self-government.

Do the day's work. If it be to protect the rights of the weak, whoever objects, do it. If it be to help a powerful corporation better to serve the people, whatever the opposition, do that. Expect to be called a stand-patter, but don't be a stand-patter. Expect to be called a demagogue, but don't be a demagogue. Don't hesitate to be as revolutionary as science. Don't hesitate to be as

reactionary as the multiplication table. Don't expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong. Don't hurry to legislate. Give administration a chance to catch up with legislation.

We need a broader, firmer, deeper faith in the people; A faith that men desire to do right, that the Commonwealth is founded upon a righteousness which will endure, a reconstructed faith that the final approval of the people is given not to demagogues, slavishly pandering to their selfishness, merchandising with the clamor of the hour, but to statesmen, ministering to their welfare, representing their deep, silent, abiding convictions.

[Full speech available for reference at: <https://coolidgefoundation.org/resources/have-faith-in-massachusetts/>.]

The Inspiration of the Declaration of Independence (Excerpt)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania / July 5, 1926

We meet to celebrate the birthday of America. The coming of a new life always excites our interest. Although we know in the case of the individual that it has been an infinite repetition reaching back beyond our vision, that only makes it the more wonderful. But how our interest and wonder increase when we behold the miracle of the birth of a new nation. It is to pay our tribute of reverence and respect to those who participated in such a mighty event that we annually observe the fourth day of July.

It is not so much then for the purpose of undertaking to proclaim new theories and principles that this annual celebration is maintained, but rather to reaffirm and reestablish those old theories and principles which time and the unerring logic of events have demonstrated to be sound. Amid all the clash of conflicting interests, amid all the welter of partisan politics, every American can turn for solace and consolation to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States with the assurance and confidence that those two great charters of freedom and justice remain firm and unshaken. Whatever perils appear, whatever dangers threaten, the Nation remains secure in the knowledge that the ultimate application of the law of the land will provide an adequate defense and protection.

Governments do not make ideals, but ideals make governments. This is both historically and logically true. Of course the government can help to sustain ideals and can create institutions through which they can be the better observed, but their source by their very nature is in the people. The people have to bear their own responsibilities. There is no method by which that burden can be shifted to the government. It is not the enactment, but the observance of laws, that creates the character of a nation.

About the Declaration there is a finality that is exceedingly restful. It is often asserted that the world has made a great deal of progress since 1776, that we have had new thoughts and new experiences which have given us a great advance over the people of that day, and that we may therefore very well discard their conclusions for something more modern. But that reasoning can not be applied to this great charter. If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final. No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions. If anyone wishes to deny their truth or their soundness, the only direction in which he can proceed historically is not forward, but backward toward the time when there was no equality, no rights of the individual, no rule of the people. Those who wish to proceed in that direction can not lay claim to progress. They are reactionary. Their ideas are not more modern, but more ancient, than those of the Revolutionary fathers.

The rights of the individual are held sacred and protected by constitutional guaranties, which even the Government itself is bound not to violate. If there is any one thing among us that is established beyond question, it is self-government – the right of the people to rule.

We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things. These did not create our Declaration. Our Declaration created them. The things of the spirit come first. Unless

we cling to that, all our material prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren sceptre in our grasp. If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded as the fathers who created it.

[Full speech available for reference at: <https://coolidgefoundation.org/resources/inspiration-of-the-declaration-of-independence/>.]

Speech at Westfield (Excerpt)

Westfield, Massachusetts / September 3, 1919

If there are any who doubt that our institutions, formed in those days, did not establish a peoples' government, let them study the action of the Massachusetts Convention which ratified the Federal Constitution in 1788. Presiding over it was the popular patriot Governor John Hancock. On the floor sat Samuel Adams, who had been the father of the Revolution, preeminent champion of the liberty of the people. Such an influence had he, that his assertion of satisfaction, was enough to carry the delegates. Like a majority of the members he came opposed to ratification. Having totally thrown off the authority of foreign power, they came suspicious of all outside authority. Besides there were eighteen members who had taken part in Shays' Rebellion, so hostile were they to the execution of all law. Mr. Adams was finally convinced by a gathering of the workingmen among his constituents, who exercised their constitutional right of instructing their representatives. Their opinion was presented to him by Paul Revere. "How many mechanics were at the Green Dragon when these resolutions were passed?" asked Mr. Adams. "More, sir, than the Green Dragon could hold." "And where were the rest?" "In the streets, sir." "And how many were in the streets?" "More than there are stars in the sky." This is supposed to have convinced the great Massachusetts tribune that it was his duty to support ratification.

There were those, however, who distrusted the Constitution and distrusted its proponents. They viewed lawyers and men of means with great jealousy. Amos Singletary expressed their sentiments in the form of an argument that has not ceased to be repeated in the discussion of all public affairs. "These lawyers," said he, "and men of learning and moneyed men that talk so finely and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterates swallow the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves. They mean to be managers of the Constitution. They mean to get all the money into their hands and then they will swallow up us little folk, like the great Leviathan, Mr. President: yes, just like the whale swallowed up Jonah." In the convention sat Jonathan Smith, a farmer from Lanesboro. He had seen Shays' Rebellion in Berkshire. There had been no better example of a man of the people desiring the common good.

"I am a plain man," said Mr. Smith, "and am not used to speak in public, but I am going to show the effects of anarchy, that you may see why I wish for good government. Last winter people took up arms, and then, if you went to speak to them, you had the musket of death presented to your breast. They would rob you of your property, threaten to burn your houses, oblige you to be on your guard night and day. Alarms spread from town to town, families were broken up; the tender mother would-cry, 'Oh, my son is among them! What shall I do for my child?' Some were taken captive; children taken out of their schools and carried away.... How dreadful was this! Our distress was so great that we should have been glad to snatch at anything that looked like a government. Now, Mr. President, when I saw this Constitution, I found that it was a cure for these disorders. I got a copy of it, and read it over and over. I did not go to any lawyer, to ask his opinion; we have no lawyer in our town, and we do well enough without. My honorable old daddy there, pointing to Mr. Singletary, won't think that I expect to be a Congressman, and swallow up the liberties of the people. I never had any post, nor do I want one. But I don't think the worse of the Constitution because lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men are fond of it. I am not of such a jealous make. They that are honest men themselves are not apt to suspect other people. Brother farmers, let us suppose a case, now. Suppose you had a farm of 50 acres, and your title

was disputed, and there was a farm of 50 acres joined to you that belonged to a man of learning, and his title was involved in the same difficulty; would you not be glad to have him for your friend, rather than to stand alone in the dispute? Well, the case is the same. These lawyers, these moneyed men, these men of learning, are all embarked in the same cause with us, and we must all sink or swim together. Shall we throw the Constitution overboard because it does not please us all alike? Suppose two or three of you had been at the pains to break up a piece of rough land and sow it with wheat: would you let it lie waste because you could not agree what sort of a fence to make? Would it not be better to put up a fence that did not please every one's fancy, rather than keep disputing about it until the wild beasts came in and devoured the crop? Some gentlemen say, Don't be in a hurry; take time to consider. I say, There is a time to sow and a time to reap. We sowed our seed when we sent men to the Federal Convention, now is the time to reap the fruit of our labor; and if we do not do it now, I am afraid we shall never have another opportunity."

There spoke the common sense of the common man of the Commonwealth. The counsel of the farmer from the country, joined with the resolutions of the working men from the city, carried the convention and the Constitution was ratified. In the light of succeeding history, who shall say, that it was not the voice of the people, speaking with the voice of Infinite authority?

[Full speech available for reference at: <https://coolidgefoundation.org/resources/speeches-as-governor-of-mass-1919-1920-10/>.]