

COOLIDGE CUP DECLAMATION

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Inaugural Address (Excerpt)

Washington, D.C. · March 4, 1925

This Administration has come into power with a very clear and definite mandate from the people. The expression of the popular will in favor of maintaining our constitutional guarantees was overwhelming and decisive. There was a manifestation of such faith in the integrity of the courts that we can consider that issue rejected for some time to come. Likewise, the policy of public ownership of railroads and certain electric utilities met with unmistakable defeat. The people declared that they wanted their rights to have not a political but a judicial determination, and their independence and freedom continued and supported by having the ownership and control of their property, not in the Government, but in their own hands. As they always do when they have a fair chance, the people demonstrated that they are sound and are determined to have a sound government.

When we turn from what was rejected to inquire what was accepted, the policy that stands out with the greatest clearness is that of economy in public expenditure with reduction and reform of taxation. The principle involved in this effort is that of conservation. The resources of this country are almost beyond computation. No mind can comprehend them. But the cost of our combined governments is likewise almost beyond definition. Not only those who are now making their tax returns, but those who meet the enhanced cost of existence in their monthly bills, know by hard experience what this great burden is and what it does. 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 because I wish to save people. The men and women of this country who toil are the ones who bear the cost of the Government. Every dollar that we carelessly waste means that their life will be so much the more meager. 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.

If extravagance were not reflected in taxation, and through taxation both directly and indirectly injuriously affecting the people, it would not be of so much consequence. The wisest and soundest method of solving our tax problem is through economy. Fortunately, of all the great nations this country is best in a position to adopt that simple remedy. We do not any longer need wartime revenues. The collection of any taxes which are not absolutely required, which do not beyond reasonable doubt contribute to the public welfare, is only a species of legalized larceny. Under this republic the rewards of industry belong to those who earn them. The only constitutional tax is the tax which ministers to public necessity. The property of the country belongs to the people of the country. Their title is absolute. They do not support any privileged

class; they do not need to maintain great military forces; they ought not to be burdened with a great array of public employees. They are not required to make any contribution to Government expenditures except that which they voluntarily assess upon themselves through the action of their own representatives. Whenever taxes become burdensome a remedy can be applied by the people; but if they do not act for themselves, no one can be very successful in acting for them.

The time is arriving when we can have further tax reduction, when, unless we wish to hamper the people in their right to earn a living, we must have tax reform. The method of raising revenue ought not to impede the transaction of business; it ought to encourage it. I am opposed to extremely high rates, because they produce little or no revenue, because they are bad for the country, and, finally, because they are wrong. We can not finance the country, we can not improve social conditions, through any system of injustice, even if we attempt to inflict it upon the rich. Those who suffer the most harm will be the poor. This country believes in prosperity. It is absurd to suppose that it is envious of those who are already prosperous. The wise and correct course to follow in taxation and all other economic legislation is not to destroy those who have already secured success but to create conditions under which every one will have a better chance to be successful. The verdict of the country has been given on this question. That verdict stands. We shall do well to heed it.

Economy in the Interest of All (Excerpt)

Meeting of the Business Organization of the Government · June 30, 1924

[...] American civilization is the product of a constant and mighty effort. One of the greatest perils to an extensive republic is the disregard of individual rights. In our own country such rights do not appear to be in immediate danger from direct attack, but they are always in jeopardy through indirect action.

One of the rights which the freeman has always guarded with most jealous care is that of enjoying the rewards of his own industry. Realizing that the power to tax is the power to destroy and that the power to take a certain amount of property or of income is only another way of saying that for a certain proportion of his time a citizen must work for the Government, the authority to impose a tax on the people has been most carefully guarded. Our own Constitution requires that revenue bills should originate in the House, because that body is supposed to be more representative of the people. These precautions have been taken because of the full realization that any oppression laid upon the people by excessive taxation, any disregard of their right to hold and enjoy the property which they have rightfully acquired, would be fatal to freedom. A government which lays taxes on the people not required by urgent public necessity and sound public policy is not a protector of liberty, but an instrument of tyranny. It condemns the citizen to servitude. One of the first signs of the breaking down of free government is a disregard by the taxing power of the right of the people to their own property. It makes little difference whether such a condition is brought about through the will of a dictator, through the power of a military force, or through the pressure of an organized minority.

The result is the same. Unless the people can enjoy that reasonable security in the possession of their property, which is guaranteed by the Constitution, against unreasonable taxation, freedom is at an end. The common man is restrained and hampered in his ability to secure food and clothing and shelter. His wages are decreased, his hours of labor are lengthened. Against the recurring tendency in this direction there must be interposed the constant effort of an informed electorate and of patriotic public servants. The importance of a constant reiteration of these principles can not be overestimated. They can not be denied. They must not be ignored.

There is a most urgent necessity for those who are charged with the responsibility of government administration to realize that the people of our country can not maintain their own high standards, they can not compete against the lower standards of the rest of the world, unless we are free from excessive taxes.

With us economy is imperative. It is a full test of our national character. Bound up in it is the true cause, not of the property interests, not of any privilege, but of all the people. It is preeminently the source of popular rights. It is always the people who toil that pay. It seems to

me, therefore, worthy of our highest endeavor. It is this which gives the real importance to this meeting.

[...] We must have no carelessness in our dealings with public property or the expenditure of public money. Such a condition is characteristic either of an undeveloped people, or of a decadent civilization. America is neither. It stands out strong and vigorous and mature. We must have an administration which is marked, not by the inexperience of youth, or the futility of age, but by the character and ability of maturity. We have had the self control to put into effect the Budget system, to live under it and in accordance with it. It is an accomplishment in the art of self government of the very highest importance. It means that the American Government is not a spendthrift, and that it is not lacking in the force or disposition to organize and administer its finances in a scientific way. To maintain this condition puts us constantly on trial. It requires us to demonstrate whether we are weaklings, or whether we have strength of character. It is not too much to say that it is a measure of the power and integrity of the civilization which we represent. I have a firm faith in your ability to maintain this position, and in the will of the American people to support you in that determination. In that faith in you and them, I propose to persevere. I am for economy. After that I am for more economy. At this time and under present conditions that is my conception of serving all the people. [...]

So far as it is within my power I will not permit increases in expenditures that threaten to prevent further tax reduction or that contemplate such an unthinkable thing as increase in taxes. If with increasing business our revenues increase, such increase should not be absorbed in new ways of spending. They should be applied to the lowering of taxes. In that direction lies the public welfare.

Bok Tower Address (Excerpt)

Lake Wales, Florida · February 1, 1929

Our country is giving an increasing amount of attention to art. We have reached a time when our people have more leisure for enjoyment and more means for gratifying their taste. Even during its colonial history it was not without some progress in this direction. Very early it produced painters of historic merit. Some of the architecture of the eighteenth century continues to hold a very high place, but with the exception of a few public buildings these creations were for private use and reached but a few people.

While the United States has been by no means lacking in spiritual vision, and, considering the circumstances of its surroundings, has been remarkable in the devotion of its religious life, yet, being new and undeveloped, it has been necessary for our people first of all to give their attention to the material side of existence. We have been forced to get things done. We have been required to build cities, improve harbors, open mines, cut down forests, lay out great systems of transportation, till the soil, erect factories, open banks, and develop commerce. We have been making a new Nation out of raw materials. What others have done in many centuries we have crowded into the short space of 300 years. It is only in the last generation that the great body of our people have been sufficiently relieved from the pressing necessities of existence so that they could give some thought to the art of living.

It is significant of our institutions and of the spirit of our national life that in the opening up of the new era we have attempted to give to the people at large what in other days had been enjoyed only by a fortunate and privileged few. This effort began with popular education. The free public school, the endowed academy and college, the high school, and the State university were the beginnings of this movement. They have more recently been supplemented by public art galleries, popular concerts for the presentation of the best music, and the opening of innumerable public parks. The useful and the practical is being supplemented by the artistic and the beautiful. [...]

Many people have given large sums to these purposes, and municipal, State, and national resources have been employed in ever-increasing amounts. [...]

Some of the largest fortunes which were ever accumulated in the United States have been almost entirely devoted to such charities.

We can not observe this movement without smiling a little at those who but a short time ago expressed so much fear lest our country might come under the control of a few individuals of great wealth. They claimed that the rich were growing richer and the poor were growing poorer. Our experience has demonstrated that the reverse of this would be much nearer the truth. So many of our people have large amounts of property that it has taken on the aspect of being common. The distinction that it once carried is gone. It is also doubtful if there ever was a time when even great wealth gave its possessors so little power as at present. Their money is of very little value in determining political action. Capital is so easily secured for any promising enterprise that it is no longer necessary to be rich to go into business, even on an extensive scale. The possession of money has never been sufficient to gain the social attentions of persons of culture and refinement.

On the other hand, the advantages that are enjoyed by people of moderate means, including the great mass of wage earners, were never so great as they are at present. Not only is their income proportionately greater than ever before, but their whole method of life, their opportunities to secure benefits which but a short time ago were the exclusive possession of the rich, have been tremendously increased. [...]

Gradually, for complete revolutions do not occur in a day, we have transferred our allegiance to the people. It is for them that our songs are made, our books are published, our pictures are painted, our public squares are adorned, our park systems are developed, and the art of the stage and the screen is created. While these things are done by individuals, this movement is "of the people, by the people, and for the people." [...]

Now, therefore, in a spirit of thankfulness for the success of our institutions, which is here attested, and appreciation of the munificent generosity, which is here exhibited, in my capacity as President of the United States, I hereby dedicate this Mountain Lake Sanctuary and its Singing Tower and present them for visitation to the American people.

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.