

Coolidge Cup Declamation

Official Speech Excerpt Packet
2024 Coolidge Cup

Contains six speech excerpts for preliminary rounds 1-6



Inaugural Address

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.

For context and for reference, [the full speech is available here](#).

Note also that this excerpt retains original spellings, which in some cases differ from modern spellings.

The Genius of America

Washington, D.C. · October 16, 1924

[...] It is not very long, as history views matters, since all of us were alien to this soil.

[...] It is a truism, of course, but it is none the less a fact which we must never forget, that this continent and this American community have been blessed with an unparalleled capacity for assimilating peoples of varying races and nations. The continuing migration which in three centuries has established here this nation of more than a hundred million, has been the greatest that history records as taking place in any such brief period.

[...] Starting anew in a land of almost unlimited natural opportunity, the early settlers found that the success of their nation-building experiments must depend upon their working harmoniously together, sinking non-essential differences, cooperating frankly and sincerely in the general interest, and, above all else, forgetting the ancient antagonisms. It has been our good fortune that we have been able to shake off the old traditions, to strike hands with our neighbor in the common effort to preserve our new-found liberties. And along with this, through our system of universal education, we have been able to guard against the revival of old, or the creation of new regional or group hostilities.

[...] It must be the hope of every American citizen to maintain here as a permanent establishment, and as a perpetual inheritance for Americans of the future, the full measure of benefits and advantages which our people have been privileged to enjoy. It is our earnest wish to cooperate and to help in every possible way in restoring the unfortunate countries of the Old World. We want to help them to rid themselves of the bad traditions, the ancient animosities, the long established hostilities. We want our America to continue to be an example and a demonstration that peace, harmony, cooperation and a truly national patriotic sentiment may be established and perpetuated on an American scale. We believe our first great service to the Old World will be in proving this. And in proving it, we shall be doing the things that will best equip us, spiritually and materially, to give the most effective help toward relieving the suffering nations of the Old World.

[...] But in cherishing all that is best in the land of your origin, and in desiring the highest welfare of the people of the old home, the question arises as to how that result can best be secured. I know that there is no better American spirit than that which is exhibited by many of those who have recently come to our shores. It is my belief that those who live here and really want to help some other country, can best accomplish that result by making themselves truly and wholly American. I mean by that, giving their first allegiance to this country and always directing their actions in a course which will be first of all for the best interests of this country. They cannot help other nations by bringing old world race prejudices and race hatreds into action here. In fact,

they can best help other countries by scrupulously avoiding any such motives. It can be taken for granted that we all wish to help Europe. We cannot secure that result by proposing or taking any action that would injure America. Nor can we secure it by proposing or taking any action that would seriously injure some European country. The spirit of America is to help everybody and injure nobody. We can be in a position to help only by unifying the American nation, building it up, making it strong, keeping it independent, using its inclination to help and its disinclination to injure. Those who cast in their lot with this country can be true to the land of their origin only by first being true to America. When the public sees and realizes that racial groups here are first of all devoted to the interests of this country, there will be little difficulty in securing here the present needed help and assistance for the countries of the old world.

[...] Let us maintain all the high ideals which have been characteristic of our different races at home. Let us keep our desire to help other lands as a great and broad principle, not to help in one place and do harm in another, but to render assistance everywhere. Let us remember also that the best method of promoting this action is by giving undivided allegiance to America, maintaining its institutions, supporting its Government, and, by leaving it internally harmonious, making it eternally powerful in promoting a reign of justice and mercy throughout the earth.

For context and for reference, [the full speech is available here](#).

Note also that this excerpt retains original spellings, which in some cases differ from modern spellings.

Have Faith in Massachusetts

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.

For context and for reference, [the full speech is available here](#).

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Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval a Bill Providing for Adjusted Compensation for War Veterans

Washington, D.C. · May 15, 1924

To the House of Representatives:

Herewith is returned, without approval, H.R. 7959, a bill “to provide adjusted compensation for veterans of the World War, and for other purposes.”

[...] We have no money to bestow upon a class of people that is not taken from the whole people. Our first concern must be the nation as a whole. This outweighs in its importance the consideration of a class, and the latter must yield to the former. The one compelling desire and demand of the people to-day, irrespective of party or class, is for tax relief. The people have labored during the last six years under a heavy tax burden. This was necessary to meet the extraordinary costs of the war. This heavy assessment has been met willingly and without complaint. We have now reached a financial condition which permits us to lighten this tax burden. If this bill becomes law, we wipe out at once almost all the progress five hard years have accomplished in reducing the national debt. If we now confer upon a class a gratuity such as is contemplated by this bill, we diminish to the extent of the expenditures involved the benefits of reduced taxes which will flow not only to this class but to the entire people. [...]

The prosperity of the nation, which is the prosperity of the people, rests primarily on reducing the existing tax burden. No other action would so encourage Business. No other legislative enactment would do so much to relieve Agriculture. The drastic executive campaign for economy in Government expenditures has but one purpose—that its benefits may accrue to the whole people in the form of reduction in taxes. I can not recede from this purpose. I am for the interests of the whole people. The expenditures proposed in this bill are against the interests of the whole people. I do not believe they are for the benefit of the veterans.

[...] Considering this bill from the standpoint of its intrinsic merit, I see no justification for its enactment into law. We owe no bonus to able-bodied veterans of the World War. The first duty of every citizen is to the nation. The veterans of the World War performed this first duty. To confer upon them a cash consideration or its equivalent for performing this first duty is unjustified. It is not justified when considered in the interests of the whole people; it is not justified when considered alone on its own merits. The gratitude of the nation to these veterans can not be expressed in dollars and cents. No way exists by which we can either equalize the burdens or give adequate financial reward to those who served the nation in both civil and military capacities in time of war. The respect and honor of their country will rightfully be theirs

forever more. But patriotism can neither be bought nor sold. It is not hire and salary. It is not material, but spiritual. It is one of the finest and highest of human virtues. To attempt to pay money for it is to offer it an unworthy indignity which cheapens, debases, and destroys it. Those who would really honor patriotism should strive to match it with an equal courage, with an equal fidelity to the welfare of their country, and an equal faith in the cause of righteousness.

[...]

America entered the World War with a higher purpose than to secure material gain. Not greed but duty was the impelling motive. Our veterans as a whole responded to that motive. They are not asking as a whole, they do not want as a whole, any money recompense. Those who do seek a money recompense for the most part, of course, prefer an immediate cash payment. We must either abandon our theory of patriotism or abandon this bill. Patriotism which is bought and paid for is not patriotism. Our country has maintained the principle that our Government is established for something higher and finer than to permit those who are charged with the responsibility of office, or any class whose favor they might seek, to get what they can out of it. Service to our country in time of war means sacrifice. It is for that reason alone that we honor and revere it. To attempt to make a money payment out of the earnings of the people to those who are physically well and financially able is to abandon one of our most cherished American ideals. The property of the people belongs to the people. To take it from them by taxation can not be justified except by urgent public necessity. Unless this principle be recognized our country is no longer secure, our people no longer free. This bill would condemn those who are weak to turn over a part of their earnings to those who are strong. Our country can not afford it. The veterans as a whole do not want it. All our American principles are opposed to it. There is no moral justification for it.

For context and for reference, [the full speech is available here](#).

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Education: the Cornerstone of Self-Government

Washington, D.C. · July 4, 1924

[...] America is turning from the mere thought of the material advantage to a greater appreciation of the cultural advantage of learning. It is coming to be valued more and more for its own sake. People desire not only the intelligence to comprehend economic and social problems, but they are finding increased leisure is little more than time wasted in indulgence, unless an opportunity for self-development and self-expression has been provided in youth by the cultivation of a taste for literature, history, and the fine arts.

[...] Teaching is one of the noblest of professions. It requires an adequate preparation and training, patience, devotion, and a deep sense of responsibility. Those who mold the human mind have wrought not for time, but for eternity. The obligation which we all owe to those devoted men and women who have given of their lives to the education of the youth of our country that they might have freedom through coming into a knowledge of the truth is one which can never be discharged. They are entitled not only to adequate rewards for their service, but to the veneration and honor of a grateful people.

[...] The encouragement and support of education is peculiarly the function of the several States. While the political units of the district, the township, and the county should not fail to make whatever contribution they are able, nevertheless since the wealth and resources of the different communities vary, while the needs of the youth for education in the rich city and in the poor country are exactly the same, and the obligations of society toward them are exactly the same, it is proper that the State treasury should be called on to supply the needed deficiency. The State must contribute, set the standard, and provide supervision if society is to discharge its full duty not only to the youth of the country, but even to itself.

The cause of education has long had the thoughtful solicitude of the National Government. While it is realized that it is a State affair, rather than a national affair, nevertheless it has provided by law a Bureau of Education. It has not been thought wise to undertake to collect money from the various States into the National Treasury and distribute it again among the various States for the direct support of education. It has seemed a better policy to leave their taxable resources to the States, and permit them to make their own assessments for the support of their own schools in their own way. But for a long time the cause of education has been regarded as so important and so preeminently an American cause, that the National Government has sought to encourage it, scientifically to investigate its needs, and furnish information and advice for its constant advancement. Pending before the Congress is the report of a committee which proposes to establish a Department of Education and Relief, to be presided over by a Cabinet officer. Bearing in mind that this does not mean any interference with the local control, but is

rather an attempt to recognize and dignify the importance of educational effort, such proposal has my hearty indorsement and support.

It is thus that our educational system has been and is ministering to our national life. Our country is in process of development. Its physical elements are incomplete. Its institutions have been declared, but they are very far from being adopted and applied. We have not yet arrived at perfection. A scientific investigation of child life has been begun, but yet remains to be finished. There is a vast amount of ignorance and misunderstanding, of envy, hatred, and jealousy, with their attendant train of vice and crime. We are not yet free, but we are struggling to become free economically, socially, politically, spiritually. We have limited our amount of immigration in order that the people who live here, whether of native or foreign origin, might continue to enjoy the economic advantages of our country, and that there might not be any lowering of the standards of our existence, that America might remain American. We have submitted an amendment to the national Constitution designed to protect the child life of the Nation from the unwarranted imposition of toil, that it might have greater opportunity for enlightenment. All of these movements are in the direction of increased national freedom, and an advance toward the realization of the vision of Washington and Lincoln.

A new importance is attaching to the cause of education. A new realization of its urgent necessity is taking hold of the Nation. A new comprehension that the problem is only beginning to be solved is upon the people. A new determination to meet the requirements of the situation is everywhere apparent. The economic and moral waste of ignorance will little longer be tolerated. This awakening is one of the most significant developments of the times. It indicates that our national spirit is reasserting itself. It is a most reassuring evidence that the country is recovering from the natural exhaustion of the war, and that it is rising to a new life and starting on a new course. It is intent, as never before, upon listening to the word of the teacher, whether it comes from the platform, the schoolhouse, or the pulpit. The power of evil is being broken. The power of the truth is reasserting itself. The Declaration of Independence is continuing to justify itself.

For context and for reference, [the full speech is available here](#).

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The Inspiration of the Declaration of Independence

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.

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