

Address Before the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York

(1)

Calvin Coolidge became the 30th president of the United States after the death in office of Warren G. Harding in 1923. Elected in his own right in 1924, Coolidge gained a reputation as a small-government conservative who said very little, earning him the nickname “Silent Cal.” He delivered the following address on November 19, 1925.

(2)

This time and place naturally suggest some consideration of commerce in its relation to government and society. We are finishing a year which can justly be said to surpass all others in the overwhelming success of general business. We are meeting not only in the greatest American metropolis, but in the greatest center of population and business that the world has ever known.

(3)

The foundation of this enormous development rests upon commerce. New York is an imperial city, but it is not a seat of government. The empire over which it rules is not political, but commercial ... Political life and industrial life flow on side by side, but practically separated from each other.

What’s going on?

(4)

I should put an even stronger emphasis on the desirability of the largest possible independence between government and business. Each ought to be sovereign in its own sphere. When government comes unduly under the influence of business, the tendency is to develop an administration which closes the door of opportunity, becomes narrow and selfish in its outlook, and results in an oligarchy. When government enters the field of business with its great resources, it has a tendency to extravagance and inefficiency, but, having the power to crush all competitors, likewise closes the door of opportunity and results in monopoly ... The general results in our country, our freedom and **prosperity**, warrant the assertion that our system of institutions has been advancing in the right direction in the attempt to solve these problems. We have order, opportunity, wealth, and progress.

Adapted from Coolidge, C. (1925, November 19). *Address before the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York*. Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=479>

What’s going on?

How does this relate to what you have read already?

What is the overall message of the passage?

What questions do you have?