Esther Rhoads Coolidge Submissions to ACLANG

Essay #1

*You have learned and achieved much up to this point in your life. What are the next intellectual frontiers you hope to explore in college and how do you envision you might use the knowledge you gain?*

*Note: for this essay we are not simply asking what you hope to major in during college and what job you want as a career. Instead, please write about the ideas that interest you most, what you still have to learn about them, and what you envision you might do with the knowledge you gain in college. Please limit your essay to 400 words.*

The Industrial Revolution enhanced the quality of countless lives with an explosion of wealth creation that, for example, has reduced the youth mortality rate by 90 percent. Unfortunately, it appears that this progress is slowing. Two great thinkers have convinced me that the two centuries of progress we have experienced is ending due to both government regulation and public outrage. Deirdre McCloskey speaks of a period of growth during which real income has grown by 10,000% as the “Great Enrichment” produced by “human ingenuity emancipated.”1 Peter Theil, however, notes that growth in key industries has stagnated, questions why we see continual advances in information technology, but not in other technological areas, and suggests that “fake culture wars” are undermining entrepreneurship.2

I believe that a key factor barring further progress is the lack of societal support for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship in the 1800s led to skyrocketing prosperity that won it acceptance. Today, however, there is general scorn for entrepreneurs and encouragement for ever more government regulation. Thus, for example, Elon Musk, one of history’s greatest entrepreneurs, opted to move his headquarters out of California, proclaiming the state “the land of overregulation, overlitigation, overtaxation, and scorn.”3

I have long held these ideas and won the John Stossel essay contest in school with my piece arguing against the minimum wage. My passion for understanding economics has continued to grow. This past summer, I attended Mises University to learn about and discuss Austrian economics with experts. I also recently began my own podcast highlighting today’s anti-progress agenda and interviewing business and political veterans on why progress and innovation are slowing while regulation is rising.

While undue regulation of entrepreneurs stifles the “Great Enrichment,” this is only one aspect of the emergent order, the habitat in which uninhibited entrepreneurs thrive. I want to study economics because I want to understand the essential laws of this emergent order, though it is difficult to grasp since they lie under the surface of social development. This is vital for my understanding of the complex dynamics involved and for my advocacy of the cause of progress.4 Studying economics at degree level would give me the tools to understand these laws and argue for *laissez-faire* ideals.

After graduating in economics with a journalism minor, I aim to write professionally on economics, advocating for the forces of progress, economic liberation, and elite entrepreneurship, those forces which produce our ever-increasing development and prosperity.

1 Deirdre McCloskey (2020), “The Great Enrichment,” Discourse magazine website, July 13, 2020, <https://www.discoursemagazine.com/culture-and-society/2020/07/13/the-great-enrichment/>.

2 Peter Thiel (2011), “The End of the Future,” National Review magazine website, October 3, 2011, <https://www>.nationalreview.com/2011/10/end-future-peter-thiel/.

3 Tim Levin (2021), “Elon Musk bashes California for ‘Overtaxation’ after Tesla’s Move to Austin, but Says he Misses his Friends,” Business Insider India magazine website, December 23, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.in/thelife/news/elon-musk-bashes-california-for-overtaxation-after-teslas-move-to-austin-but-says-he-misses-his-friends/articleshow/88440421.cms#:~:text=misses%20his%20friends-,Elon%20Musk%20bashes%20California%20for%20'overtaxation'%20after%20Tesla's%20move%20to,says%20he%20misses%20his%20friends&text=Elon%20Musk%20bashed%20California%20for,the%20state%2C%20mainly%20his%20friends>.

4 Russell Roberts (2005), “The Reality of Markets,” Econlib website, September 5, 2005,<https://www.econlib.org/library/Columns/y2005/Robertsmarkets.html>.

Essay #2

*In the decades during which Coolidge made his career, from 1895 onward, states and the federal government not only expanded existing government offices but also created new departments and new authorities. With a few exceptions, the rise of new bureaucracy at all levels troubled Calvin Coolidge. Pick one reason Coolidge came to dislike bureaucracy, and describe how he sought to combat bureaucracy, whether as an elected leader in Massachusetts or later, in Washington, D.C. Please limit your response to 400 words. Important note: although you personally may not agree with Coolidge, for this essay try to get inside Coolidge’s head and explain his thinking and actions. To prepare yourself to write this essay, please read Coolidge’s Autobiography and the materials available at the below link. You may augment our materials with additional research if you like.* *<https://coolidgescholars.org/2022-essay-required-readings/>*

Coolidge understood that unchecked bureaucracy leads to tyranny, describing it as “responsible to nobody,” yet having “powers to regulate and control the affairs of the people of the country.”1 He agreed with Jefferson that “the people should manage their government, and not be managed by it.”2 Coolidge saw true liberty lying only in this way and encouraged government to uphold the constitutional separation of powers as well as federalism to prevent irresponsible bureaucracy taking hold.

Coolidge spoke out against it and vetoed unconstitutional bills whenever bureaucracy threatened the separation of powers established by the Founding Fathers. The Constitution prevents any branch of government from assuming all power and, hence, becoming tyrannical. Coolidge swiftly opposed anything that threatened this balance of powers, such as the equalization fee introduced with the McNary-Haugen Bill. Coolidge dubbed this fee, whatever its advocates called it, a “sales tax upon the entire community,” that would “involve an extraordinary relinquishment of the taxing power on the part of Congress,”3 given that it would proceed without congressional oversight. The McNary-Haugen Bill and a similar one that preceded it that would have granted taxation powers to an organization outside Congress, violating the constitutional separation of powers and, thus, posing the threat of an autocratic bureaucracy, so Coolidge vetoed both.

Coolidge also curtailed the threat of national bureaucracy by reinforcing federalism. Federalism limits national bureaucracies by preventing them from seizing excessive power and by giving the states a voice. Coolidge proclaimed the states the “sheet anchors of our institutions” and argued that the national bureaucracy had too much control over society.4 Coolidge argued that a centralized government was wont to introduce “bureaucracy, tyranny, inflexibility, reaction, and decline” and agreed with the Founding Fathers that the “internal concerns” of each state should be left to its own government.5 People can thrive without the interference of the central government, but government at state level is necessary for order and liberty. While the national government “is too far away to be informed of local needs [and] inaccessible to be responsive to local conditions,” state governments exist for the very purpose of helping those under its domain.6 Seeing the need for this balance, Coolidge urged the states to “discharge the full obligations that have been imposed on them” and be mindful of their duties lest the national bureaucracy encroach and federalism decline.7

1 Press Conference on Possible New Bureau

2 Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge*, p. 102.

3 Veto of Senate Bill 3555

4 States’ Rights and National Unity

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 The Reign of Law

Essay #3

*In 1926, President Coolidge received an unusual gift, twin lion cubs. He named the first cub “Budget Bureau,” symbolizing his commitment to cutting the federal budget. Today, the budget of the U.S. federal government is in deficit, and has been for many years. Research President Coolidge's views and policies related to the budget. Then, research the budget of the federal government in the modern era. Finally, in an essay of 600 words or fewer, explain how you think Coolidge would address the budget deficit were he president today. Note: although personally you may not agree with Coolidge, try to get inside his head and explain how you think Coolidge would address the federal deficit. Please visit the following link which lists research resources for this essay. You may use additional resources as well.* *<https://coolidgescholars.org/2022-essay-required-readings/>*

Entitlement spending, exempt from congressional vote, makes dealing with today’s deficits impossible, with mandatory program costs increasing by $1 trillion in the past decade.1 However, this third rail of entitlement reform is an extremely touchy subject that no one wants to act on lest they be accused of being cruel. Congress, not wanting to upset voters by changing Medicare or raising taxes, prefers to let such spending happen automatically, leaving the voters with no one to blame for it. The Simpson-Bowles Commission “proposed changes to Social Security and Medicare as part of its overall plan,” but these were immediately rejected.2 However, Calvin Coolidge can guide us how to approach this third rail.

While some suggested increasing taxes to alleviate the deficit, Coolidge believed this would rather aggravate the problem. Not only would it hurt the working class, but also threaten private property rights. Coolidge warned that “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.”3 Coolidge called the power of taxation “the power to destroy”4 and understood that people were not free if they had no control over their own property. When taxes rise people lose the gains of their hard work and are thus denied their constitutional right to enjoy the profits of their labor.

Rather than raise taxes, Coolidge cut unnecessary spending. He exhorted bureaucrats to “reduce the Government payroll...[which] will lead to greater efficiency”.5 He understood that tax revenues are the people’s money and worked on the principle of the state conducting “necessary activities with the smallest possible expenditure.”6 Coolidge closely scrutinized federal spending and “never hesitated to ask commissions to speed up their work and get their business done,” lest he “supplant them with those who [he] thought would do better.” 7

One “discretionary” area that Coolidge reduced was military spending. Strongly opposed to the League of Nations, he eschewed entanglements in other countries’ affairs and guided America against war with Mexico many times, averting the huge potential military costs involved. Coolidge resisted military and political intervention in other countries whenever possible and urged the country to rid itself of “the expense of maintaining large standing military forces,” arguing that it threatened “[t]he very genius of a republic.”8

Most importantly, Coolidge also removed the national government’s control over welfare. The fact that the SSA paid out $7.9 billion on fraudulent claims in 20199 suggests that the national government cannot determine who truly needs assistance. Yet my own aunt, for example, desperately needed help in this regard but was denied it. After an accident that left her with brain damage and unable to provide for her young children, she had to wait 10 years before the government decided that she needed assistance.

Coolidge allocated welfare and healthcare responsibilities to the states or to “community chest” philanthropic organizations. He preferred state governments to act because they could respond to needs in a local, immediate, and personalized way “without aid or interference from the Federal Government.”10 Coolidge also understood that community chests could successfully eliminate “the waste of indiscriminate charity.”11 Even more localized and personal than state governments, community chests ensured that the community, not the national government, was providing for the truly needy.

Continuing disagreement over solving the ever-growing budget deficit does not have to go on forever. Coolidge’s success demonstrates that we neither have to sacrifice the poor’s welfare nor increase taxes to alleviate the deficit. Through lower taxes, reduced military spending, and privatized welfare we can restore to America its title of Land of the Free.

1 Niv Ellis (2019), “Lawmakers Point to Entitlements When Asked About Deficits,” The Hill website, July 28, 2019, <https://thehill.com/policy/finance/454962-lawmakers-point-to-entitlements-when-asked-about-deficits>.

2 Ibid.

3 Address at the Seventh Regular Meeting of the Business Organization of the Government.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge*, p.102.

8 Calvin Coolidge (1925), “The Navy as an Instrument of Peace,” Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation website, <https://coolidgefoundation.org/resources/the-navy-as-an-instrument-of-peace/>.

9 Investopedia (2021), “Social Security Fraud – What it’s Costing Taxpayers,” Investopedia website, last updated October 6, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/retirement/120516/social-security-fraud-what-it-costing-taxpayers.asp#:~:text=Social%20Security%20fraud%20costs%20Americans,person%20is%20not%20entitled%20to>

10 1927 Budget Message

11 Discriminating Benevolence