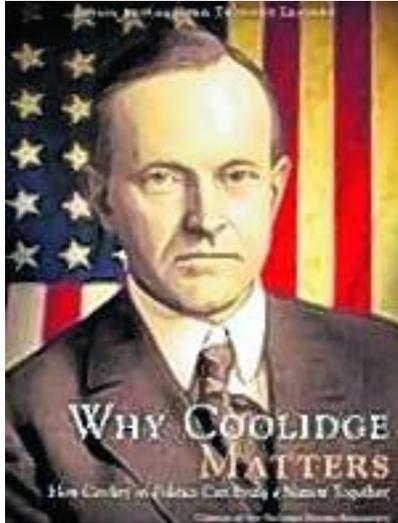


# Political civility meets Coolidge

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Suppose the twins have been watching political ads on TV and are now fighting over a stuffed toy. "You're a socialist!" says Tommy. "You're a fascist!" retorts Susie.

And suppose that Mom, reasonably enough, doesn't see any point in trying to explain political insults to 5-year-olds.

"Nice people don't use those words," Mom says mildly. "They're bad words. Just be nice!" In a similar coaxing tone, the Library of Congress, which serves members and the public regardless of party, is plugging a new coffee-table book with an equally mild title: "Why Coolidge Matters: How Civility in Politics Can Bring a Nation Together," compiled by the National Notary Association.

Two unsuccessful Democratic candidates for the presidency -- Sen. John Kerry, now chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and former Gov. Michael Dukakis (Mass.) -- have joined 19 other political figures in writing a laudatory book about a Republican who won.

Calvin Coolidge, the almost-forgotten 30th president, earned a reputation as an earnest, well-mannered but dull executive. He offended opponents as little as possible by not saying much. Though he pioneered the use of radio for political speechmaking and spoke often with reporters - - on background -- he was notably "Silent Cal" at social occasions.

"Coolidge's belief in peace, accountability and integrity continues to be as important today as during his term," writes Kerry. "And whether Republican or Democrat, America needs a Calvin Coolidge today to restore our faith in the office of the Presidency and to politics more generally."

—Carl Hartman, Associated Press