

STILL GETTING COOLIDGE WRONG AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

For more than 86 years now, they still can't get Coolidge right.

America's 30th president has been quoted year after year with mind-numbing ignorance by newspapers and television personalities as having said that "The business of America is business." What he said, in that speech on January 17, 1925, was: "After all, the chief business of the American people is business."

Omitting "after all" and "chief" makes a difference. It tells us what lazy reporters and editors didn't want to bother telling their readers: business is not the only business of America. Heck, we can't make things too complicated for Joe and Jane Sixpack to understand. It sounds and reads so much better without those qualifiers.

And they

also didn't bother to add a couple of things Coolidge added to his "business" sentence. One was: "Of course the accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of existence."

You don't want to tell them that and steer them away from their path to wealth, not even in an economy with high unemployment. The Chamber of Commerce and corporate biggies wouldn't like that.

So Coolidge's non-quote is repeated, as by Larry Kudlow's headline writer in the National Review on September 10, 2010. Anybody with Google can go ahead and find more examples. Isn't it time, by now, to get Coolidge right? Even if, at long last, just out of respect for his audience that day in 1925: the American Society of Newspaper Editors.