

so we can make the reforms necessary to preserve, protect, and even, indeed, improve Medicare for future generations.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and make a point of order a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VERBAL LITTER

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, much has been said about the so-called "lost art" of writing. The ubiquity of telephones and, more recently, electronic mail, or "cyber-chat," as well as the acceptability of alternative presentations in lieu of written essays in schools, can all be cited as contributors to the growing inability of many people to compose and edit well-organized and effective written documents. E-mail, which is daily becoming more and more common, a common method for communicating, is an easy, instant way to get a message out, but the very quickness of the transmit inhibits the kind of thoughtful consideration of the message and care in editing that are the hallmarks of good letters and great literature.

Someone has said that letters are our personal ambassadors. We politicians need to be very much aware of that. Letters are our personal ambassadors. And the trend toward relying more and more exclusively on e-mail means that the future's historical archives will become littered with broken sentence fragments, incomplete thoughts, and embarrassingly ignorant spelling. Think about it. Mr. President, can you imagine the Federalist essays by Jay, Madison, and Hamilton—can you imagine those Federalist essays, had they been typed in such a stream-of-consciousness manner and then spewed across the fiber optic web the way some messages are nowadays?

I am sure that Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, the authors of the Federalist Papers, did not speak as cogently and fluidly as they wrote. Perhaps nobody does, or very few persons do. But they were no slouches at the speaker's rostrum. I doubt that they would have been very good on television. I have thought about that a good many times, and wondered how Daniel Webster or Henry Clay or John C. Calhoun would have come across on television. How would they do on 20-second sound bites? They would do as poorly as ROBERT C. BYRD, I would anticipate.

As Francis Bacon observed, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man." Think about that also. That is very true. "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an

exact man." And so we write more exactly than we speak.

These Founding Fathers were certainly well read and they were good writers and, therefore, very knowledgeable and exact, precise, weighing every word.

When we speak of infrastructure, such as reservoirs and dams, we talk about the Army engineers. When we seek their recommendations about a particular dam or reservoir, they will give us advice, and it will reflect the B-C ratio, the benefit-cost ratio. Anything that is recommended by the Army engineers would have to have at least \$1 in benefits for every \$1 in costs. That is the benefit-cost ratio.

Therefore, in speaking of the Founding Fathers, which is a term that needs to be examined—"Founding Fathers"—and especially those who wrote the Federalist essays, I think in terms of the benefit-cost ratio. They made every word count. Every word carried its full weight. It had a proper place in the construction of the essay. It wasn't used lightly. It was used thoughtfully. So there was the B-C ratio.

Well, that is just a little idea of mine. But these men were knowledgeable, they were exact, and their writing was enhanced by their thoughtfulness, and, in turn, their speaking ability was enhanced by their writing, especially in the case of Daniel Webster.

When Webster made a speech, when he spoke on January 26 and January 27, 1830, in his debate with Hayne—schoolboys all across the Nation, it used to be, were required to memorize some of Webster's speeches. I don't guess they are required to memorize those speeches anymore. As a matter of fact, memorization is not looked upon as being very beneficial or helpful in some schools, I suppose. Times have changed.

But Webster was a good writer, and he memorized the speeches, many of them. Then he took them home, took them to his boarding house near the Capitol Building, and kept them for a few days, edited them, changed them, for the purposes of publication. Therefore, they were not exactly the speeches that we schoolboys memorized, they were not the exact speeches that Webster gave before the Senate. They were improved upon, just as we edit our own speeches. But we don't take them home. We don't take them to our boarding houses and keep them out several days. We edit them the same day. Many Senators probably have their staffs edit their remarks. But Webster, in doing so, had in mind exactly what Bacon referred to: "Writing maketh an exact man."

I said that the term "Founding Fathers" needed a little examination. Who were the Founding Fathers? Were they the signers of the Declaration of Independence? Were they the Framers of the Constitution? Were they the Framers of the first American Constitution, the Constitution under the Articles of Confederation? Were they

the signers of the second Constitution, the Constitution of 1787?

In those days, women did not participate in the conventions—but would the Founding Fathers also not include those individuals who met in the various State conventions to ratify the Constitution? Would they not include the writers of the Declaration of Independence? Would they not include the Members of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation? They surely debated much that went into the second Constitution. Would they not include the legislatures of the States that then existed?

So when we talk about the Founding Fathers, many people associate that term only with the framers of the second American Constitution. And certainly the framers were Founding Fathers, but not all the Founding Fathers, I am saying, not all the Founding Fathers were framers of the Constitution. So there is a little difference. It isn't a serious matter by any means, and I am not taking issue with anyone, but I have thought about that term.

It is hard to imagine that their spoken words could possibly be undercut by any of the all too common fillers that plague common conversation today, those "ums" and "uhs" and "likes," and especially that inanity of inanities, "you know." That is the most useless phrase. That is pure deadwood. It doesn't carry its weight in a speech, "you know."

Any time one turns on a television—which I don't do very often; perhaps that is why I have a lot of old ideas—he will hear a string of "you knows" from the anchormen and women, "you know."

What does it mean, "you know"? What do I know? You know? That is taking advantage of the other person when you say, "You know." "You know." How silly, how useless a phrase. That certainly would not carry its weight under the B-C ratio—the benefit-cost ratio—that inanity of inanities; that inanity of inanities, "you know."

Oh, how I hate that pernicious phrase, "you know." This is simply a filler. The tongue is operating in overdrive and the brain is somewhat behind the tongue, "you know."

We are told by Plutarch that—well, I am providing a rather good example of what Plutarch was saying. He said that Alcibiades was the greatest orator of his time.

Plutarch wrote that Demosthenes said that Alcibiades was the greatest speaker of his time and that when he came to a place in his oration and was having difficulty remembering the exact word, he paused—he paused—he simply paused until the right word came. He did not fill the gap with "you knows" or "ahs," "uhs," or "ums," and so on. He simply waited until the right word came.

Try it sometime. Record your own remarks. See if you are using that

phrase. Our remarks are awash in "you knows." And they are uttered all around us by people who are unaware of how they are filling the time between words when the mind is still struggling to complete the thought. They are filling the time with that inanity of inanities—"you know."

Speaking now as a listener, I contend there is almost nothing more irritating and distracting than suffering through countless "you knows" while trying desperately to discern what message the speaker is attempting—vainly—to convey.

If I were teaching a class, that would be one of the things I would come down very hard on. I know that most people have no idea that their speech is packed chock-full of "you knows," and it just becomes a habit. And if one listens to it very much, he will fall victim to the same bad habit. For the first thing he knows, he will find that his remarks are being filled with "you knows." And these are sometimes strung together in staccato multiples: "you know, you know, you know?" It is simply filler—meaningless—sound to fill dead air while the speaker's unprepared brain hunts down the sentence's conclusion.

Perhaps it is because Americans are such creatures of the television age, used to actors, or those who think they are actors, news broadcasters, even politicians, reading seamlessly from scripts, cue cards, and teleprompters. We are not used to hearing pauses of any length so we unconsciously try not to allow even a few seconds of quietude to fill the air.

We have become unused to true public speaking and debate in which informed individuals prepared their minds with facts and arguments, listened to each other, and retorted and rebutted extemporaneously. Such debate demands close attention and even, shockingly, moments of silent, deliberate thought while a rejoinder is mentally composed.

I never hear the senior Senator from New York, Mr. MOYNIHAN, using that phrase. I have noticed that he pauses from time to time, but he does not use the phrase "you know." I think of him as a fine example of a teacher at whose feet I would be honored to sit.

These small pauses, like the quick closing and opening of the stage curtains between acts, allow the speaker to savor the argument he has laid out, while his opponent prepares a clever and pointed rebuttal. Few can do that anymore, even those so-called professional debaters—the talking heads of media and politicians. If the response is quick, it is quite likely to be a prepared, canned, one-liner sound bite which sells the sender's message regardless of whether or not it is completely pertinent.

It is possible to expunge "you knows" from public discourse. I have seen it done by conscientious individuals, as I indicated a little earlier, but it is no easy task. Like poison ivy,

"you knows" are pernicious and persistent. It takes strong medicine to kill back that lush growth, and diligent weeding to keep opportunistic tendrils from creeping back into common use. To rid one's speech of "you know," one must first learn to listen to himself or to herself. One must learn to train himself to recognize that he uses "you know" or other distracting filler words. As a test, ask someone to tape you or to count the "you knows."

Various members of my staff, as and when and if they hear another staff person saying "you know," they point their finger immediately at that person. And in that way they help to break the habit. I think many people will be unpleasantly surprised at the results of such a test. Then enlist these same friends to alert you when an unconscious "you know" pops out. They will enjoy that part of the task. And then work at it, work at it, work at it. The more you do, the more you will notice just how often you use such needless and asinine fill-ins. Weed them out of your speech, and you will increase your reputation as a good speaker and a thoughtful person. There is a common saying to the effect that "I would rather be silent and be thought a fool, than to open my mouth and prove it." Speech peppered with "you knows" has much the same effect.

As I have observed already, Alcibiades was noted for his practice of simply pausing silently when the chosen word momentarily escaped his mind's ability to marshal and bring it safely to his lips. Then, when he could continue, he simply resumed speaking. And he was the finest orator of his time. Clearly, a moment of silence is preferable to "you know." Think of it: "Four score and, like, seven years ago, you know, our Forefathers, uh, brought forth, you know, upon this continent, you know, a new nation, you know, conceived in, uh, liberty, and, you know, you know, dedicated to the proposition that, uh, uh, like, all men are created, like, equal." With that kind of delivery, President ABRAHAM Lincoln could not have stoked the nation's determination to see the Civil War through to its conclusion. Or let's imagine Martin Luther King: "I, uh, have a dream, you know." Not a very stirring message when it is lost in the verbal litter.

Ridding your speech of such verbal trash may not make an individual a leader of nations or of men—that requires great thoughts as well as a clear and stirring delivery—but leaving them in can surely blight the path to greatness, you know.

Mr. President, I have some remarks on another matter, but I see the distinguished senior Senator from Massachusetts, my friend, my true friend, Senator KENNEDY is on the floor. I am going to ask if he wishes to speak at this time?

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Senator for his typical kindness. I would be glad to make my remarks after my good friend from West Virginia. It is al-

ways a pleasure to listen to him at any time, but particularly on a Friday when I can give full attention to his eloquence.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank Senator KENNEDY. As I have remarked before, and I shall say again, he is one who would have appropriately graced a seat at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. I can see him working in that audience on the floor and off the floor, arguing forcefully and passionately, and advocating his position on a matter and doing it well.

So I will proceed. I will try to be brief, more so this time than other occasions.

BRIGHT SPOTS BRING HOPE TO EDUCATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have recently drawn much attention to the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, released in February of this year. My visceral, my visceral reaction to the poor scores of high school seniors on the mathematics and science portions of this exam was one of great dismay and disbelief. How could United States students be performing so poorly given the massive amounts of money invested each year in our nation's education system?

My spirits have since been lifted in the past month when hearing about the progress that my own home state of West Virginia is making on the education front. In my years as a United States Senator, my state has been scoffed at more times than I can remember, or want to remember. Well, today, I come to the floor to boast a little bit about what we are accomplishing back in the mountains and foothills of West Virginia.

For the second time in a row, West Virginia has posted the highest education marks of any state in the "Quality Counts" report released annually by Education Week magazine. West Virginia has tied only with Connecticut for top honors in the study, which grades states on standards and assessments, quality of teaching, school climate, and adequacy, equity, and allocation of resources. In achievement, no grades were granted but states were ranked by the percentage of students who scored at or above the proficient level in mathematics and science on the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Seven states, including West Virginia, made significant gains in the percentage of fourth graders who scored at the proficient level or above on the 1996 mathematics test. What is even more striking about these scores is the fact that West Virginia ranks forty-ninth in per capita income and family income, an economic statistic which is often correlated with lower student achievement.

Earlier this year, West Virginia was recognized as a national model in geography education by the National Geographic Society. National Geographic