

The Whiskey Speech

Delivered to Mississippi State Legislators, this speech concerned a politically hot issue: The question of prohibition of alcoholic liquor, a law then in force in Mississippi.

A speech by Rep. Noah S. 'Soggy' Sweat, Jr (April 4, 1952)

My friends
I had not intended
To discuss this controversial subject
At this particular time.

However - I want you to know
That I do not shun controversy -
On the contrary
I will take a stand on any issue -
At any time -
Regardless of how fraught with controversy
It might be.

You have asked me -
How I feel about whiskey.
All right -
Here is how I feel about whiskey.

If - when you say whiskey -
You mean -
The devil's brew
The poison scourge
The bloody monster
That defiles innocence

Dethrones reason
Destroys the home
Creates misery - and poverty -
Yea - literally takes the bread
From the mouths of little children.

If you mean - the evil drink
That topples the Christian man and woman
From the pinnacle of righteous, gracious living
Into the bottomless pit of degradation -
And despair - and shame -
And helplessness - and hopelessness
Then - certainly - I am against it.

But if - when you say whiskey -
You mean the oil of conversation
The philosophic wine -
The ale that is consumed
When good fellows get together -
That puts a song in their hearts
And laughter on their lips
And the warm glow of contentment
In their eyes -
If you mean Christmas cheer
If you mean the stimulating drink
That puts the spring in the old gentleman's step
On a frosty, crispy morning
If you mean the drink
Which enables a man to magnify his joy
And his happiness
And to forget - If only for a little while -
Life's great tragedies
And heartaches - and sorrows

If you mean that drink -
The sale of which pours into our treasuries
Untold millions of dollars
Which are used to provide tender care
For our little crippled children

Our blind - our deaf - our dumb
Our pitiful aged - and infirm
To build highways
And hospitals
And schools
Then - certainly - I am for it!

This is my stand.
I will not retreat from it.
I will not compromise.

This speech is renowned for the way in which it seems to come down firmly and decisively on both sides of the question. The speech gave rise to the phrase If-by-whiskey, used to illustrate such equivocation in argument. It is sourced from Wikipedia, which offers more background on both speaker and speech.

Brian Woolf's comment: It is a wonderful example of how a speaker can, using humor, show that there are strengths on both sides of an argument, and that, maybe, that should be acknowledged and they should and consider finding ways to comprise. It is one of the 11 great speeches in The Speaker's Toolbox.

Copyright © 1952 Rep. Noah S. 'Soggy' Sweat, Jr

About the author...

Besides a full business life in retailing, and later, loyalty marketing, the other part of Brian Woolf's life has been filled with diverse interests: particularly speaking (including Toastmasters), travel (including all seven continents), and reading (including history). And he has written seven books sharing what he has learned along the journey. Ask him, two favorite trips? Antarctica and the Nile. Ask him, two favorite books? *The Lessons of History* (Will & Ariel Durant) and *Over the Edge of the World* (Laurence Bergreen).
He loves learning and sharing.

And there's more where this came from...

**Visit Brian Woolf on the web for his complete collection of
articles, speeches, insights and practical advice, at**

www.brianwoolf.com

Email: brian@brianwoolf.com

Tel: +1 864 458-8277

BRIANWOOLF.COM