

I Warn You

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A speech by Lord Neil Kinnock (May 15, 1987)

If Margaret Thatcher is re-elected as Prime Minister on Thursday - I warn you.

I warn you that you will have pain - when healing and relief depend upon payment.

I warn you that you will have ignorance - when talents are untended and wits are wasted, when learning is a privilege and not a right.

I warn you that you will have poverty - when pensions slip and benefits are whittled away by a government that won't pay in an economy that can't pay.

I warn you that you will be cold - when fuel charges are used as a tax system that the rich don't notice and the poor can't afford.

I warn you that you must not expect work - when many cannot spend, more will not be able to earn. When they don't earn, they don't spend. When they don't spend, work dies.

I warn you not to go into the streets alone after dark or into the streets in large crowds of protest in the light.

I warn you that you will be quiet - when the curfew of fear and the gibbet of unemployment make you obedient.

I warn you that you will have defence of a sort - with a risk and at a price that passes all understanding.

I warn you that you will be home-bound - when fares and transport bills kill leisure and lock you up.

I warn you that you will borrow less - when credit, loans, mortgages and easy payments are refused to people on your melting income.

If Margaret Thatcher wins on Thursday -

I warn you not to be ordinary

I warn you not to be young

I warn you not to fall ill

I warn you not to get old.

And no, this unique, anaphoric, passionate political speech of 284 words did not push Margaret Thatcher out of office although, four months later, it did help push Neil Kinnock into office as leader of Britain's Labour Party. Great speeches usually have consequences - just not always immediately.

The lesson? Anaphora - the repeating of words or phrases at the beginning of clauses or sentences - is a powerful communication tool in speeches of all lengths.

Brian Woolf's comment: This has been a favorite speech of mine ever since I first heard it. It has a clear point, hammered home on every line. It was delivered with passion. It's a political speech but its framework can be adapted to any message that you care deeply about. William Safire says it's Britain's greatest political speech. It is one of the 14 great speeches in The Speaker's Blueprint.

About Brian Woolf...

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

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