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Presented 21 May 2004
Public Speaking Speech 5 – The Rant Speech

Task

Deliver a speech in which you rant. In other words, rail, declaim, inveigh, cry out angrily about the wrongness of something. You need to develop exactly what it is about the irking thing that evokes outrage in you.

Full-Sentence Outline of the Speech

- I. Explain the rationale for the Iraq war.
 - A. The evidence presented for Iraq's possession of WMDs was tenuous.
 - B. Yet, the invasion was justified with the doctrine of preemption.
- II. Describe the precautionary principle, the logical basis of the war.
 - A. Compare it to walking through a dark, unknown cave.
- III. Transition to Bush's rejection of the Kyoto climate-change treaty.
- IV. There is virtual scientific consensus on the dangers of global warming.
 - A. It will lead to rising ocean levels and more severe weather patterns.
 - B. Side effects of global warming currently kill 160,000 people every year around the world; this number may nearly double by the year 2020.
- V. The Bush administration's logic of preemption as applied to Iraq should dictate immediate and intense actions against global warming.

The Speech

Think back to 14 months ago, March 2003, when the US invasion of Iraq first began. At that time, the principal justification put forward by the Bush administration was centered on the security of the American people: Saddam Hussein, it was claimed, possessed biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction that he might conceivably hand over to terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda. The evidence adduced in defense of this allegation was, in reality, quite tenuous; the Administration succeeded only in presenting a few shaky pieces of intelligence concerning, for example, uranium from Niger and aluminum tubes—many of which were discredited even before the war commenced. Yet, the Administration emphasized the necessity of preemption, of acting before it was too late; the idea was that it would be better to discover that Iraq *did not* in fact possess weapon stockpiles after an invasion than to discover that Iraq *did* possess weapon stockpiles as a result of another devastating terrorist attack.

This logic was, in essence, a form of the precautionary principle, which stipulates that when one knows little about the potential dangers of a situation, one should proceed with utmost caution and restraint until later findings dictate otherwise. To use an analogy, if you are running through a completely dark cave and you have no idea what lies ahead of you, it's best to stop and feel around for any walls or boulders or cliffs that may be in your path before continuing onward. Many opponents, of course, argued that the invasion of Iraq was hardly a cautious alternative

to continued weapons inspections, given that it would increase the likelihood of Saddam's use of weapons of mass destruction as a last resort *and* would exacerbate anti-American hostility throughout the Middle East. But this idea of preemption, of "better safe than sorry" was nonetheless the logical basis of the war's justification.

Now think back to 38 months ago, March 2001, when the Bush administration announced its refusal to accept the Kyoto climate-change treaty, which called on industrialized nations to reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions to below 1990 levels by the year 2012.

Unlike the charges against Iraq, the dangers of global warming were well known and widely accepted. Virtually the entire international scientific community has acknowledged that global warming is occurring and is primarily the result of human activity. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that the earth's average temperature could increase between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Celsius by 2100. This will mean more severe weather patterns like floods and droughts, the wider occurrence of insect-borne diseases, and rising ocean levels that could threaten ecological treasures like the Florida Everglades, as well as human housing along the coast. A recent study by scientists from the World Health Organization and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine estimated that side effects of global warming—ranging from hunger to malaria—kill 160,000 people

every year around the world; they expect that number to nearly double by the year 2020!

The Bush administration claimed that it could not accept the Kyoto treaty on the grounds that the scientific understanding of global climate change remained too shaky and uncertain. Even if we were to go against the overwhelming findings of the scientific community and give Bush the benefit of the doubt on this, the Administration's own doctrine of preemption as applied to the Iraq invasion should dictate a precautionary approach. In other words, it is *precisely because* our ability to predict global warming is so inexact and it is *precisely because* our understanding of its effects is so incomplete that we must exercise caution in our emission of greenhouse gases. The Bush administration should adhere to its own logic not just by embracing the Kyoto treaty—which many scientists regard as inadequate—but by going further to advance even stronger measures that are demanded by the potential seriousness of the situation. To do otherwise would be to continue running at full speed down a dark tunnel, without stopping to find out what it is that lies before us.