Buncombe [1]

Buncombe

by Ronnie W. Faulkner, 2006

The word "Buncombe" has, along with its variations of "bunk" and "bunkum," entered American slang [2] as a term synonymous with meaningless speech. The popular term for pretentious and nonsensical talk originated with Felix Walker [3], a U.S. congressman (1817-23) who represented a region in western North Carolina that included Buncombe County [4]. Walker gave a high-sounding speech on a militia [5] pension bill to a nearly empty congressional chamber. Afterward, when questioned about his reasons for the verbiage, he reportedly stated that he was "speaking . . . to Buncombe." This elicited the response: "And buncombe your talk certainly was." Thereafter the term was used to refer to insincere political speech but was later expanded to include any trivial and overblown application of language.

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Slogans, slang, and sayings [2]
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