

Words from the Past

William Penn, leader of the early American colonists who eventually named their state of Pennsylvania in his honor, gave some important rules concerning conversation. The advice is as timely today as it was in his day:

- "Avoid company where it is not profitable or necessary, and in those occasions, speak little, and last."
- "Silence is wisdom where speaking is folly, and always safe."
- "Some are so foolish as to interrupt and anticipate those who speak instead of hearing and thinking before they answer, which is uncivil, as well as silly."
- "If thou thinkest twice before thou speakest once, thou wilt speak twice the better for it."
- "Better to say nothing than not to the purpose. And to speak pertinently, consider both what is fit, and when it is fit, to speak."
- "In all debates, let truth be thy aim, not victory or an unjust interest; and endeavor to gain, rather than to expose, thy antagonist."

All of Penn's wisdom is certainly in line with what my grandfather advocated, in a little more down-to-earth way: It is better to be silent and be considered a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.

--Beecher Hunter