

THE PHILOSOPHY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CEDA

Presented at

The Eastern Value Debate Conference

October 9-10, 1982

James E. Tomlinson

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

For the past nine years I have been proud to be associated with the Cross-Examination Debate Association, both as a debater and as a director of debate. In those years I have felt privileged to have participated in the development of value-oriented debate, which has become a viable option for college debaters. I have been fortunate also in having been on the west coast as CEDA first started, and now to be in the east as it rapidly takes root here as well. CEDA is today a large and important collegiate organization. It is one that has fundamental concepts at its base, and it is my purpose to review those concepts with you and address some of our problems as well. I appreciate the invitation to share with you my observations and experiences. I hope they will help you in your explorations of CEDA.

To explain why so many people perceive a need for CEDA, it is vital to understand what collegiate debate was like before CEDA. Let us begin our discussion by examining the characteristics of American collegiate debate in the late 1960's. First of all, debate tournaments used the Oxford style of debate. That is a format without cross-examination. What cross-examination did exist was rare and scattered. Usually cross-examination was used in regional association tournaments, in Lincoln/Douglas and in "off-topic" debate. My own experience in "traditional" or NDT debate (1968-70), was that we had perhaps one or two cross-exam opportunities per year in southern California. A second characteristic of 1960's debate was that propositions of policy were used. A national debate topic has been chosen in the U.S. since 1920. Only in the 1921-22 academic year was a non-policy topic chosen. Thus, policy debate was the predominant type of resolution. Again, as with cross-exam, some regional tournaments might offer off-topic non-policy questions, but this too was relatively rare. Thirdly, the national topic was to be debated for the entire year. Finally, a national championship was available. This championship, in existence since 1946, was achieved by a single debate team at the National Debate Tournament.

These basic characteristics are not objectionable, are they? Of course not. But, during the late 1960's there were some developments related to those basic characteristics which did become objectionable to many in the debate community. Affirmative teams began to more narrowly interpret the resolution. These attempts were made to catch the negative unprepared for the particular affirmative interpretation. Today we recognize these creative innovations as "squirrel" cases. We might define a "squirrel" case as one which is so narrow that it ignores most of the resolution, or is actually off the topic and yet the affirmative tries to make it appear that the case is topical.

Unfortunately, such affirmative cases began winning debates. Then when such cases succeeded at the National Debate Tournament, other schools naturally copied the tactic. Thus, since the late 1960's the narrow interpretation of the resolution has been increasingly accepted.

I can recall the incredible controversy over the 1975-76 NDT resolution, "Resolved: That the Federal Government Should Adopt a Comprehensive Program to Control Land Use In the U.S." Now, most of us have some idea of what was intended by this topic. I was flabbergasted to hear, in the first tournament of that year, a marijuana case. Yes, you heard right, a marijuana case. You see, the affirmative claimed that; (1) marijuana was a significant problem, (2) that marijuana grows in the land, and (3) therefore the growing of marijuana is land use and thus topical. In the very next tournament another affirmative case was even more creative. The affirmative claimed; (1) methods for institutionalizing people in mental hospitals must be revised, (2) mental hospitals are constructed on land, and (3) this was obviously land use, therefore it was topical. Both of these cases actually won debates, though not on the ballots I filled out. I recognize that these two examples are a bit extreme, but the fact remains that certain aspects of what we now call NDT debate, actually encouraged such activity.

These developments produced a strongly negative reaction for many in the debate community and stimulated the birth of CEDA. I will not detail that beginning here, you may look at Dr. Don Brownlee's CEDA YEARBOOKS, or the Fall 1981 issue of The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta to catch up on the history of the organization. The point is that CEDA provided an attractive alternative, as you can see from the rate of growth that I have summarized in Table I. I have also included (at the end of this article) the first listing of all the topics chosen for debate in CEDA.

Let's turn our attention to some of the current controversy in CEDA. Many of you have chosen to attend this conference because you are not sure what to do with a value-oriented topic. When a value topic was first chosen for use in CEDA (the 1974-75 debate year), no one knew what to do! Those of us who were debating then were forced to be creative, to experiment. It was a very exciting year, a year of innovation which witnessed unique affirmative approaches and negative responses. We did not, and you should not, rely on traditional policy strategies. I am convinced that it is that sense of challenge and excitement that has attracted many of you to CEDA. Now, I don't want you to think of CEDA as only being value debate. CEDA has a basic philosophy that is applicable to either policy or value debate. It just so happens that for the past eight years we have chosen resolutions that have been clearly value in orientation.

CEDA was formed to stress some balance among evidence, appropriate delivery, and analysis. Another hallmark of CEDA has been to ask debaters to remember the intent of the resolution. These are qualities to be retained in any CEDA round. To ignore them is to reject the basic philosophy of the organization. The problem we face today, I believe, is that some people have "joined the CEDA bandwagon" without understanding that basic philosophy and the

reasons many of us felt compelled to form and support an organization separate from NDT debate. Thus, we have some people looking at CEDA debate topics as if they were NDT topics! Over the past three to four years, we find there has been an increasingly narrow focus by the affirmative, and ever widening negative arguments. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? I'm afraid that unless we somehow recall why CEDA was formed, we may lose the attractiveness and vitality that has made the organization as popular as it has become.

I admit that value debate is a challenge intellectually. You will not find textbooks filled with strategies for you to use, as you can for policy debate. The problem is that too many debaters have been taking the easy way out. They drag policy considerations into the value arena. For example, why in a value-oriented topic does the affirmative have to deal with inherency? In the past three years I've witnessed an increasing number of debates where negative teams demand, and judges give wins, based on inherency. I've asked why this is happening, and get a response such as "well, inherency is always part of a debate." Sure it is, in policy! Inherency makes a great deal of sense in policy, it does not have much justification in value debate. A few years ago, when several new schools began debating in CEDA this same problem arose, but it was widely considered to be an irrelevant issue. In fact, CEDA has adopted some resolutions where the traditional inherency arguments would have to be reversed!

And what about the use of plans? Again, there has been a startling increase in the number of affirmatives who offer and the number of negatives who demand a plan. Some of my colleagues claim that their debaters have a right to produce plans, even interpret the resolution as policy, if they wish to. That sounds remarkably familiar, at least to me. It is the same justification for what happened in NDT debate some 15 years ago. I would remind those who take this position, that in CEDA we have deliberately worded topics so that they would not be interpreted as policy, so that debaters may explore non-policy considerations. If a plan is introduced, the debate shifts from values back into policy bringing with it PMN's and PMA's and CA's. We also know what it forces most negative teams to do, they begin to rely on policy responses. I have not yet seen a debate on a value oriented topic where a team can handle both true value considerations and also a plan. Unfortunately, most negative teams will not argue that the plan is inappropriate. They might try doing just that. For eight years CEDA has deliberately worded topics to avoid policy, a team that ignores that intentionality of the resolution has ignored one of the basic tenets of the organization that sponsors the topic they are debating. I would remind you that initially in CEDA's use of value debate, plans and arguments related to them were deemed inappropriate. I have not been persuaded that this position should be rejected.

The point I'm trying to make is that out of eight years of experience with value oriented topics, it is only in the past three to four years that these problems have arisen. They have not arisen because of innovations in value argumentation, but because of increased reliance on policy debate strategies being forced into value debate. If we continue to allow this to happen, I

believe that CEDA will lose one of its most important philosophical roots. Those of you debating in CEDA and those of us judging must insist on some understanding and commitment to CEDA's basic ideals.

These are some of the issues that I believe we must face up to in the next couple of years. We must make some decisions about what this organization is supposed to be and how we can best serve the people who are part of it. I would be very disappointed if we did not face up to the challenge. If we don't CEDA may well become nothing but a shadow of its original idea, and a poor imitation of NDT debate.

TABLE I

SUMMARY TABLE OF GROWTH IN THE
CROSS-EXAMINATION DEBATE ASSOCIATION

	YEAR				
	1971-72	1974-75	1978-79	1981-82	1982-83
Colleges and Universities Participating	18	47	102	239	(anticipated 30% increase over 81-82)
Number of Tournaments	7	15	67	102	161*

*Number of tournaments scheduled for 1982-83

TOPICS SELECTED FOR DEBATE BY CEDA 1971-82

- 1971-72 Resolved: That the United States should withdraw all its ground combat forces from bases located outside the western hemisphere.
- 1972-73 (fall) Resolved: That the penal system in the United States should be significantly improved.
- (spring) Resolved: That the United States should seek to restore normal diplomatic and economic relations with the present government of Cuba.
- 1973-74 (fall) Resolved: That victimless crimes should be legalized.
- (spring) Resolved: That the United States should reduce its commitment to Israel.
- 1974-75 (fall) Resolved: That the federal government should grant amnesty to all those who evaded the draft during the Vietnam war.
- (spring) Resolved: That American television has sacrificed quality for entertainment.
- 1975-76 Resolved: That education has failed its mission in the United States.
- 1976-77 Resolved: That legal protection of accused persons in the United States unnecessarily hinders law enforcement agencies.
- 1977-78 Resolved: That affirmative action programs have been deleterious in their effects.
- 1978-79 Resolved: That a United States foreign policy significantly directed toward the furtherance of human rights is desirable.
- 1979-80 Resolved: That compulsory national service for all qualified U.S. citizens is desirable.
- 1980-81 (fall) Resolved: That protection of the national environment is a more important goal than the satisfaction of American energy demands.
- (spring) Resolved: That activism in politics by religious groups harms the American political process.
- 1981-82 (fall) Resolved: That unauthorized immigration into the United States is seriously detrimental to the United States.
- (spring) Resolved: That the American judicial system has overemphasized the rights of the accused.