

ON CONSIDERATION OF JUDGING IN CEDA DEBATE TOURNAMENTS —
A MODEST PROPOSAL

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The most common comment heard at CEDA tournaments is not about issues or evidence but about judging. The comments are usually not favorable. Of course we hear the traditional suggestion that a debater won a round and lost the decision (no debater ever really lost a debate). These comments can often be relegated to the realm of wishful thinking but another class of comment might need further consideration.

When coach and team return home and read their ballots, finding reasons for decision that make little or no sense in terms of CEDA debate, it is time to wonder what is going on. We all know it is difficult to find well-qualified judges. Consider how few people have ever debated, how many of these people debated in the CEDA format (we are only a few years old), how many of them you can find, how many of them are willing to give up hours of their time to judge and the problem becomes understandable. For those coaches and students who constantly complain about judges at a tournament, perhaps the perfect solution is to put them in charge of the judging pool for the next tournament. The problem is great and the solutions are few.

We turn to the same answers year after year. Former debaters are called, local lawyers are recruited, fellow faculty members are cajoled, anyone who has ever mentioned they once debated instantly comes to mind and then we move down our list to graduate students, law school students, undergraduate students, and someone's mother. We often feel guilty when we place some of these people in a round and even more so when we read their ballots. This problem is not instantly solvable but some steps can be taken to ameliorate it.

The first step is to help the tournament director by fulfilling our part of the bargain. Most invitations request judges at the rate of one per two teams entered. If we have two teams and there is one of us, this seems pretty reasonable. With CEDA's emphasis on performance by two teams in a tournament, many like to travel three or four teams to better insure success. The problem begins when there is only one judge, leaving "uncovered" teams for the tournament director to deal with. Each of us can try harder to find that extra judge to cover that extra team. We should try to find a person that we would not object to as a judge for one of our teams. But how do you coax that very successful lawyer or valued colleague to ride in a van fourteen hours, give up a weekend, eat at McDonalds, and share a room with students? Well most of us

don't even ask. Some have the luxury of competent graduate assistants who are willing, can be coerced, bought, or even enjoy the "fun" of a weekend on the road. This is not the case for most of us, however.

The end result is the problem that we face week in and week out. What is that guy doing in that round? Well we should realize that guy is giving up his free time, helping out a friend and doing the best job he can. The fault is often ours and we need to understand that.

Understanding will not, sadly, solve many of our problems. So a further step might be in order. We should consider the judging pool with which most tournament directors are confronted. In general, we believe that most tournament directors go out of their way to find people who can judge competently. However, the pool does get a little weak from time to time. The general weakness that we see seems to revolve around a lack of experience in debate in general and CEDA debate in particular.

This does not mean they cannot be good judges, but it does mean that they are often unaware of some of the things we consider important. Kleinau (1981) suggested that a competent judge needs to possess three things: 1) to be an informed listener, 2) to be able to take intelligent notes, and 3) to be able to understand logical thought. The last two of these criteria are qualities over which we have little control. The tournament director will, we assume, try to find people that have these qualities. The first criteria is one on which we can have some impact.

To be an informed listener it is important that the judge have at least a passing knowledge about current thought on CEDA debate theory. Most of our judging pool (other than coaches and graduate students who are active in the activity) will have had little or no experience with CEDA debate. Many debated years ago, were in programs where they got limited training, were involved in NDT programs, or were only marginally involved in debate anyway. The common denominator is lack of information about what is important in a debate round. If the judge comes from a policy background, many issues may be dealt with in a way that will leave him in a fog. Where is the plan? What about a good minor repair? These are two of the questions that we have commonly heard. One solution to this is to invoke the commonly heard response "Well the debaters all had to deal with the problem, that's fair. And anyway they are supposed to be able to adapt to the judge." How is a debater, or in fact a room full of them, supposed to adapt to the mind of a judge? Unless we decide to allow the

judge the first speech or to open a discussion after the round, this response simply will not be adequate.

One answer is a simple description, typed and handed out to all judges and debaters before the tournament, of what should be going on in the debate round. A simple review of CEDA theory with no admonition that a judge must vote on any particular issue would give everyone in the debate round equal footing. The judge could know what is important, the debaters would know what the judge has been told, and the coaches could suggest to their teams appropriate ways to handle certain issues given these ground rules.

This approach was used in a tournament earlier this year and the response was uniformly positive. Many judges felt more confident going into rounds after ten years absence from debate and many debaters felt more sure of the judge's thinking. Many potential complaints were eliminated. We have included at the end of this article our instruction sheet, although we do not claim it is perfect or even near that. The establishment of such an information sheet can at least bridge some of the gap between the uninformed and the informed listener.

Several limitations need to be suggested at this time. The tournament director needs to be careful in constructing such an instrument to be fair to all involved. We do not think a director would intentionally say that "all affirmative teams win" but the possibility of constructing statements that are interpreted in this manner does exist.

The information sheet should avoid setting rules for the debate. All issues of theory should be debatable in the round. The teams should have the option of arguing theory issues, with the team that presents the best argument winning that issue. It would be inappropriate to have a team respond that "the rules of this tournament say you cannot do that." Care must be taken to indicate that these suggestions are not absolutes.

Several technical issues may also be addressed in the information sheet. The use of prep time is an innovation with which some of the judges may be unfamiliar. This can be discussed along with time limits and other technical questions. Speaker points have inflated over the years (there was a time when eighteen points was considered a good score) and it might be appropriate to suggest some standards for the judge to follow in assigning points. This gives the judge a standard to go by and also allows the debater to interpret the scores when reading ballots later.

Debate has always had jargon but some terms we commonly use have no meaning to the judge who has been out of the activity for a while. If a debate team wishes to "switch" and present off-case arguments in the first negative speech, they need to tell the judge what they are doing. If they simply announce that they will be presenting off-case attacks, a judge who does not know what off-case is will be totally lost. Terms could be defined in an information sheet and some of these problems resolved.

In general, we believe the inclusion of an information sheet with each ballot and in every registration packet can solve some of the problems we face. It is not a cure-all, but only one modest proposal which may be helpful.

REFERENCE

Kleinau, M. D. The judge as critic. In C. Keefe, T. B. Harte, and L. E. Norton (eds.), Introduction to Debate, 1982, 249-253.

A Brief Introduction for Judges

About CEDA Debate

CEDA debate is a relatively new form of intercollegiate debate. It began on the west coast a little over ten years ago. The major difference between CEDA and traditional policy debate is the nature of the resolution. In traditional debate resolutions of policy are argued. In CEDA the resolutions are usually ones of value. This shift causes some changes in affirmative and negative approaches to the topic and some changes in debate theory.

A value proposition does not advocate a change and the affirmative team is not required to present a plan to implement the topic. Rather, the emphasis is on the defense of the truth or non-truth of the resolution as a whole. Affirmative teams may still offer examples or areas of the resolution as proof that the general statement is true. Negative teams will clash with the case presented by the affirmative but will also offer off-case attacks against the resolution. The affirmative may be asked to either defend or attack current thinking. The status quo is not the exclusive domain of the negative team.

Presumption may be either for or against the affirmative or it may be unimportant since no change is to be implemented. Traditional speaker duties with plan attacks in the second negative speech may be irrelevant since there is no plan. Off-case attacks are usually called value objections or counter values.

Time limits are 8 minutes for constructives, 3 minutes for cross examination, 4 minutes for rebuttals, and 8 minutes for prep time that each team may use when they please. Speaker points should indicate your evaluation of the debater. A poor debater should receive 20-22, average would be 23-25, and superior would be 26 or more. A value of 18 or less could be used as a harsh warning to a debater who has truly offended.