

Some Views on Recent Criticism

Ron Uselton
Debate Coach
Kansas State College, Emporia

The forensic community has been deluged by criticism and challenged for justification. Student representatives on financial boards, educators, and administrators have begun to demand support for an "intellectual exercise" that stresses an "overly competitive format." It is becoming dramatically evident that complacency in the face of criticism will not suffice. Intercollegiate forensics has been stripped of its presumption of relevance, and it is incumbent upon its practitioners to ensure that the presumption is restored.

If our society were to base its system of policy decision and public management upon superficial deliberation and restricted participation, intercollegiate forensics would have little to offer. We find our highest justification in the preparation of advocates for the deliberation process.¹ We help to foster the essential conditions for the preservation of reasoned discourse leading to the stimulation and formulation of policy change. What the student will take into the next century depends upon our academic foresight. As the world spins ever faster, pushing tradition to the sidelines, technologies change, systems alter, and startling new sciences reshape the course of the society. Advocacy remains. Advocacy remains as long as there are beings to hear and civilizations to mold. In a sense, competitive advocacy builds the bridge between the today that we know and the tomorrow that we want. In intercollegiate forensic activities we offer a laboratory for the growth and facilitation of that advocacy. On that basis, we should preserve the activity.

Intercollegiate forensics also offer training in the critical abilities necessary to evaluate advocacy. Bombarded by the mediated persuasion of the Twentieth Century, we need a sifting mechanism to keep what is worth keeping and to push the rest away. Persuasion has been called an alternative to violence, but, as the lemon-driving victim of the smooth-talking dealer might attest, persuasion can

have a very special violence of its own. We are not a nation of sheep, but neither are we a nation of extremely critical and rational beings. Forensics attempt, and often succeed, in teaching the principles and concepts of rationality that give the student a basis for the critical analysis of the issues and policies that confront him. Forensic activities foster rationality in a world where irrationality can lead to personal disaster. Forensic activities, overall, teach the human animal to think.

Perhaps the relevance of the activity is not in question. Perhaps the attacks of



relevancy aimed at the activity are really criticisms of the laboratory process, itself. Are we too competitively oriented? Do we place too much emphasis on win/loss records? Do we sacrifice persuasive principles for tournament achievement?

If we are to claim any sort of relevance for forensic activities, we must make competition a vital part of the exercise. Relevancy is based upon realistic social advocacy and policy change. Likewise, relevancy is founded upon strengthening the voice in the social arena of persuasion. Persuasion cannot take place in a vacuum, and real-life situations demand competitive formulations of the group products of social policy. Whether in the courtroom, in the assembly hall, or on the soapbox, rhetors battle with ideas and idea-makers to get their point across. As the participant in forensic competition is subject to the pen of the judge, the par-

ticipant in social advocacy is subject to the many whims of the many listeners.

Often we enmesh ourselves in the misconceptions of greatness that evolve from "beating" the other participants. We sometimes lose sight of the long-range relevancy as we go after the short-term rewards. But, the long-range relevancy is still there, and the short-term rewards are realized to be just that. The critics of the activity who indict forensics for being overly competitive are not positing a unique attack. They should also indict life for its overly competitive nature. This is not to imply that two wrongs make a right, but to further emphasize the relevancy of forensics in the social arena of policy change. We work from comparisons and standards in this society, formulated by competition and dictated by win/loss. The laboratories of forensic activities attempt to do the same.

Certainly, forensics have a long way to go before they satisfy the ideals and desires of all of those involved. We cannot be everything for everybody, but neither can we be static. We are moving fast and

talking even faster, but our mistakes are leading us to make corrections. Some of the critics of forensics speak out of ignorance of our activities and objectives, and that problem finds solvency in the dissemination of information. The most ardent critics, however, are members of the forensic community, itself. That is healthy. Because of the competition in advocacy that underlies our relevance, we listen to those views and respond. But the critics of competitiveness are utilizing the same competitiveness that they condemn (i.e., they are forcing an issue of policy change through advocacy).

If Pi Kappa Delta is to continue "to stimulate progress in and to further the interests of intercollegiate speech activities and communication in an effort to provide functional leadership training," we need to maintain our status of competitive advocacy. And, we need to utilize the advocacy for a cogent stance against the deluge of negative analysis.

1 Wayne C. Minnick, *The Art of Persuasion*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), 1965, pp. 20-22

WINNING: *A Lay Judge Lays It on the Line*

Don J. Beasley

I don't say I'm necessarily unique. Many husbands have probably gotten up at 3 A.M. with the kids. But their kids were probably not university debaters. And they didn't have to phone the kids at their dormitory room five times each to make sure they were dressing for the "Big Trip."

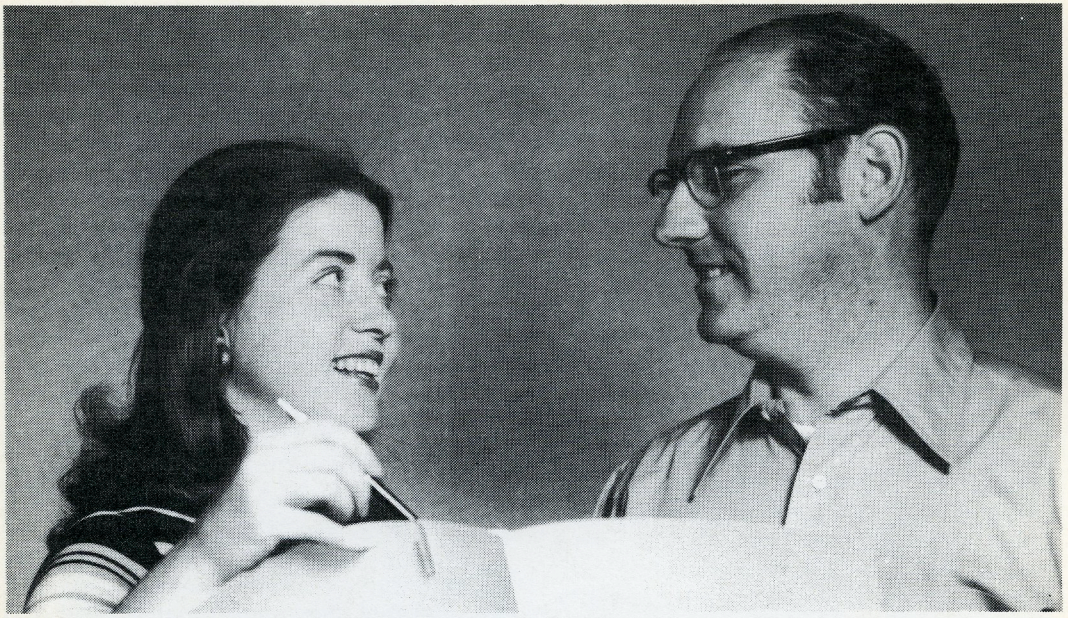
The "Big Trip" is every debate tournament with which My Wife the Debate Coach wants my assistance. She says she'd do it for me if I were coach (heaven protect us). Since my wife's only connection with the financial Powers That Be is a nodding acquaintance with the janitor who sweeps the university comptroller's office, the debate expense account is a notch above zero. That precludes hiring a paid assistant who knows what he's doing. Persuasion is her business, so that means I am the lowest-paid assistant coach on the circuit. (You can't get paid much less than "Un.")

Assistant coaches as well as coaches have the unforgettable experience of acting as judges for other teams entered in

debate tournaments. My mind churns like our washing machine the time our nephew put his rocks in, while it tries valiantly but vainly to digest a gourmet platter of verbosity. Esoteric terms like "causal link," "**prima facie** case," "**non-sequitur**," "topicality," and "regressivity" explode from the foaming lips of the whiz kids. I attempt my "Duh . . . wha's goin' on?" face, but that only increases the volume and the speed.

The debate ballot, which can be easily read by anyone with a Ph.D. in Etymology and General Semantics, says that the decision must be based on logic, quality and quantity of evidence, organization, delivery, and things like that. Assuming that "delivery" doesn't necessarily mean speed and verbiage, I'm not sure that I hear these factors at all. Since the ballot doesn't apply, how does the lay judge do his thing?

In my earlier days as an unqualified judge, I decided that my decision should be awarded to the team which best accomplishes these goals: (1) Their version



Dr. Mary Beasley, forensics director at Louisiana Technical University, and husband Don, the often-drafted assistant, judge, and driver.

and my version of what is happening in the debate most nearly coincide; (2) They explain frequently what they mean, using words of not more than six syllables; (3) They refrain from weeping, gnashing their teeth, chewing their quote cards, and jumping on chairs.

You will notice that these criteria do not include discrimination on the basis of sex. I considered the fact that it would probably hurt the egos of a male team to have a female team win the decision. However, I refuted this argument with the fact that females probably have egos too, because my wife does (could this be a hasty generalization?) and anyway, any male who'd let a female beat him deserves to lose.

I have worried about the moral implications of my decisions. In the previous case, for example, as I award high speaker points and the decision to females, am I encouraging future F. Leah Baileys, or future castrating housewives? Housewives don't need arguing egos; they need agreeing egos. Young debaters of any sex shouldn't win all the time. Should I shoot down a team that's too successful so that they will realize that logic and evidence don't always win in life? They may later use logic and evidence to point out to their boss that he's a blunderthud, and

thus get themselves fired. By the same token, a team shouldn't lose all the time either. They may quit debate, which is good for me, but bad for them.

I'm thinking of developing a questionnaire to administer before the debate, based on the fact that education (debate is supposed to be educational, in case you didn't know) should be based on the victim's needs. Subtle questions will be asked. Which team psychologically **needs** the win? What effect will winning or losing have on the debater's future development and career? etc. My questionnaire should perhaps be administered both before and after the debate, so that if intense feelings toward the other team develop which might affect the debaters' feelings about winning (sympathy, revulsion, admiration, etc.), those can also be recorded. The judge can then evaluate and comment on the debating techniques, but base his decision primarily on the educational value to the team of winning or losing.

As I share my innovative thoughts with my wife, she summons her "Good heavens, I've created a monster!" expression. In her calm, rational, come-let-us-reason--together former debater voice, she tells me, "Actually, the team which wins the debate is the team which wins the debate. There, now, isn't that simple?"

CHAPTER NOTES . . . Edited by Roselyn Freedman

Deadline for Editor Freedman for the May issue is MARCH 20. In order to distribute the May issue before the new early closing dates of many schools, deadlines must be set earlier than in previous years. Please mail your chapter news to Roselyn Freedman so it will reach her by March 20.

PROVINCE 3

2 Chapters Reporting

AUGUSTANA COLLEGE, ILLINOIS

Mr. Robert Swanson, assistant debate coach, has begun a reorganizational effort to aid in revitalizing the Augustana Chapter. Newly elected officers are: Gary Laatsch, president; Jim Weaver, vice-president; Rick Godfrey, treasurer; Julie Storme, secretary; Blake Harrop, publicity.

Beth Matzek received the second place award in listening at the Bradley University tournament to qualify as the most unusual award.

Among other activities planned for the year are a college round-robin tournament and two high school tournaments.

ROBERT C. WILLIAMS

ALUMNI CHAPTER #1

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN —

WHITEWATER

Reporter: John Cease

A new program commenced in early December with chapter members receiving copies of *The Forensic*. John Cease, corresponding secretary, dispatches the copies with the quarterly newsletter to the 40 members. This action has given rise to a "suggested reading" section in the newsletter in which the officers note specific features of interest to alumni members. Mary Earle, historian, is additionally furnishing notes and bits of information from the history of the alumni chapter.

The chapter supported the Wisconsin Epsilon Chapter at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in the Pre-Christmas Tournament by providing the Robert C. Williams Memorial Trophies to the best speakers in debate and individual events. These awards were presented by John Cease on behalf of the alumni chapter.

Participating in a meeting to map a

broad strategy for the chapter were: Dick Hammerstrom, president; Steve Dickman, vice-president; Terry Ostermeier, secretary-treasurer; John Cease, corresponding secretary; and Mary Earle, historian. Among long term goals are the promotion of alumni chapters throughout the nation, the maintenance of communication among members, alternative service activities for the chapter and alternative activities for individual chapter members.

PROVINCE 6

2 Chapters Reporting

HARDING COLLEGE

Reporter: Richard Paine

Arkansas Zeta has compiled a substantial number of new members, awards, physical maladies, emotional shocks, and unique experiences this year. The squad consists of two senior teams: Jana Smith (PKD chapter president); Richard Paine (treasurer-recorder) and Joe Corum (vice-president); Joe Cardot (parliamentarian); and four junior teams: Bob White — Mark Crutchfield, Mark Worth — Cecil Wilson, Mona Smelser — Tim Mangrum, and Steve Kell — Jim Cone.

In tournament competition Harding has consistently advanced to the elimination rounds in debate and has achieved numerous awards in individual events. Sweepstakes awards have included the second-place debate sweepstakes trophy at the Bradley tournament in Peoria, Ill. The squad was named one of three distinguished delegations to the annual Arkansas Congress of Human Relations.

To aid high school speech activity in Arkansas, Harding has held demonstration debates within the state and hosted the annual high school debate workshop and tournament in December.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

AT MONTICELLO

Reporter: Teresa Carver

Dr. Evan Ulrey, national vice-president, presided over the installation ceremonies when Arkansas Theta Chapter of Pi Kappa Delta was installed on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Monticello, Dec. 4, 1973.

The newly initiated officers are: Rose



Seated [L-R]: David Williams, vice-president; Rose Holley, president; Linda Johnston, secretary. Second row [L-R]: Teresa Carver, reporter; Jo Carol McFalls, Cookie Morphis, Joette Furlough, Ronnie Tucker. Third row [L-R]: Dean Robert L. Kirchman, David Ray, sponsor; Pridgett Hargis, and Dr. Evan Ulrey, installing officer.

Holley, president; David Williams, vice-president; Linda Johnston, secretary-treasurer; and Teresa Carver, reporter.

Others initiated included: Joette Furlough, Pridgett Hargis, Jo Carol McFalls, Martha Morphis, Ronnie Tucker, and Mr. David Ray, chapter sponsor and director of forensics.

Dr. Robert L. Kirchman, academic dean, was initiated as the chapter's first honorary member.

Arkansas Theta chapter is in the midst of a very busy year: trophies were brought home from tournaments in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, with additional trips scheduled for the spring semester. Additional activities include working with Boy Scouts who are working toward a Merit Badge in Communications; hosting an Arkansas novice debate meet; and sponsoring an intramural speech tournament.

PROVINCE 8 2 Chapters Reporting

CONCORDIA COLLEGE
Reporter: Steve Loger

The officers of Minnesota Zeta Chapter are Cindy Peterson, president; Pamela Shrimpton, vice-president; Steve Loger, secretary; and Betty DeBerg, treasurer.

This has been an active year for Minnesota Zeta Chapter members. At the Rockhurst Tournament the two varsity teams made it out of preliminary rounds, with one going into the octos and the second into quarter-finals; at the University of South Dakota tournament two junior varsity teams went into the octos with Fred Sternhagen ranking first speaker; at the Bradley University tournament the junior varsity team received an award for going into the octos, while the championship team won the tournament.

WISCONSIN STATE UNIVERSITY — OSHKOSH

Reporter: Lynn M. Morrissey

Officers for the Wisconsin Gamma Chapter are Brian Steffel, president; Barbara Brunner, vice-president; Mary K. Duginski, secretary; Michael Aubinger, treasurer; and Lynn Morrissey, historian.

The members of the chapter have been very active this year. The Seventh Annual Varsity Pi Kappa Delta Tournament held Pi Kappa Delta Tournament held during the fall was won by Northwestern. In an attempt to raise additional funds a car wash and a co-ed football were sponsored with extremely good results.

Among the tournaments attended were Vermilion, S.D., at which the junior varsity team of Stephen Alderton and Sherry Madaus placed third, Tom Neuhoﬀ placed fourth in impromptu speaking, and Stephen Alderton placed second speaker, and Sioux Falls, S.D., at which the team of Ronald Carlson and Beverly Herzog placed third in junior varsity debate, Chris Lalley placed first in TV, and Ann Lorge placed second in TV.

PROVINCE 9 1 Chapter Reporting

MISSISSIPPI STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

U.S. Representative David R. Bowen, D-Miss., was recently made an honorary member of Pi Kappa Delta by the Mississippi Gamma Chapter at Mississippi State College for Women. Representative Bowen had just received a plaque from Speaker of the House Carl Albert and a letter of commendation from President Nixon for being the first U.S. Representative in 20 years to have a bill which he introduced enacted into law so early in his legislative career.

Before being elected to Congress in November, 1972, Representative Bowen had served as Coordinator of Federal-State Programs for Mississippi and had been a professor of political science at Millsaps and Mississippi College.

Miss Marilyn Norris, MSCW director of forensics and Southeast Province Governor of Pi Kappa Delta, and Lydia Hodges, MSCW Pi Kappa Delta president, made the presentation to Representative

Bowen, after he had given an informal speech to the MSCW students and faculty.

The most recent MSCW forensic activity was attendance at the Mississippi Youth Congress sponsored by the Mississippi Speech Association, where the "W's" delegation won four Superior ratings for speaking from the floor, two bill preparations, and party secretarial service. The MSCW delegation had two bills pass both houses of the mock legislative assembly and was successful in having MSCW's Debra Derise elected as Republican Party secretary.

The team has a busy schedule planned for the second semester, including the hosting of the 27th annual Magnolia Tournament Feb. 15-16. Present officers are Lydia Hodges, president; Debra Derise, vice-president; Frances Daniel, secretary-treasurer; and Janna McClendon, pledge trainer.



Governor of the Province of the Southeast and sponsor of the Mississippi Gamma Chapter of Pi Kappa Delta presents a certificate of honorary membership in Pi Kappa Delta to freshman Congressman David R. Bowen, D-Miss., for his contributions to "the art of persuasion, beautiful and just."

The EDITOR Signs Off

Results of the Convention events ballot as reported in the January *Forensic* were disappointing. Disappointing, too, has been the meager response to calls for suggestions about ritual and Constitution improvements. Fortunately, a few thoughtful coaches have written about this apparent disinterest, and one particularly perceptive letter stimulates thought along new lines.

Forensic squad members have many interests: they have girl friends and boy friends and weekend dates to worry about; work-study assignments and outside jobs; meetings to attend and student government tasks; money problems and term papers and tests, and laundry to do, and packing for the next debate trip, and most of all, the wracking business of growing up. Perhaps they are not disinterested in Pi Kappa Delta, but rather, uninformed, because many other things take priority. The bright political science major who debates so well may never have heard of a contest called "Experimental Speech Criticism," or "Dramatic Duo," so he does not know whether he would like to see it programmed or not. Nor does the promising freshman forensics prospect who has been to only one tournament have much sensitivity toward the 60-year-old traditions of Pi Kappa Delta and its needs for future years. New young forensics directors, overloaded with classes, wrestling with reduced budgets and college car breakdowns, and harassed with publish or perish threats do not put Pi Kappa Delta first in their lives.

Taking time to read the *Forensic* or fill out questionnaires may not be the answer to the problems of apparent apathy, but some time spent in squad meetings discussing new ideas might be fruitful. Why not get your squad together informally some afternoon or evening and all of you, students and staff, talk about Pi Kappa Delta: what it's trying to offer; how it can be made more meaningful to this college generation (read up on it, if you don't know). Talk about new events which can be tried at the national or province or local level. Describe them in detail, perhaps experiment with some new forms in squad meeting, to evaluate their interest and worth. Talk about how we can improve on the grinding eight-debates-and-three-extemp-rounds-every-weekend routine. Talk about how we can go on building programs with less gas and less money. The ingenious minds that create the "squirrel cases" we old timers complain about could put those mental energies to work on Pi Kappa Delta and make it the swingin'est, busiest, most popular student organization on the college campuses of the USA. So talk, and think, and experiment, and then tell us, your officers.

New Members of Pi Kappa Delta

CALIFORNIA STATE
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
47487 Irving William Busse

SOUTHERN CONN. STATE
COLLEGE

47488 Lynne Cappello
47489 Gregory Denaro
47490 Joseph Leary
47508 David Bradford
47509 James Carriero
47510 Robin Deimel
47511 Ernest Kip Hartz
47512 Karen Hyfantis
47513 Mary Koch
47514 Mary Ellen Materessa
47515 Guy Ortoleva

KANSAS STATE TEACHERS
COLLEGE
47491 Kenna Pearson

ADRIAN COLLEGE
47492 Mattie Coleman
47493 Karla Burguard
47494 Kristen Frederick
47495 Bruce Goodlock
47496 William S. Kenyon III
47497 Dr. Daniel William
Scully

KEARNEY STATE COLLEGE

47498 William Bohannon
47499 Charles Gould
47500 Emilie F. Hogg
47501 Dennis Runnels
47502 Nancy Sullivan

NORTHEAST MISSOURI
STATE UNIV
47503 Mark Edward Gardner

47504 Joanna Heisel
47505 Gregory Kilgore
47506 Drew L. Sutor

CULVER STOCKTON
COLLEGE
47507 Ben F. Martin, III

CALIFORNIA STATE
POLYTECHNICAL UNIV.
47516 John S. Driggers

OLIVET COLLEGE
47052 Mike Fales
47053 Robert Fischer
47054 Charles Mefford
47055 Timothy O'Brien
47056 Mary Puls
47057 John Stimson



If we do not really listen to others, we risk developing what may be called hardening of the attitudes — a rigidity in our thinking and our behavior that will lead us into the trap of trying to solve today's problems with yesterday's ideas.

W. A. Shrope in Experiences in Communication