

come to respect its aims and its activity. I have also recognized that there are very few substantive differences in the nature of the debates that occur at the two tournaments, and that continuing the joint topic will allow for more and more information sharing and cultural exchange.

### Works Cited

- Bartanan, Michael D. and David A. Frank. *Debating Values*. Scottsdale: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1991.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Attitudes Toward History*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Freeley, Austin J. *Argumentation and Debate: Critical Thinking for Reasoned Decision Making*. 8th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993.
- Ganer, Patricia M. "The Emperor Phenomenon: The Necessity of Critic Responsibility." *Argument and Critical Practices: Proceedings of the Fifth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*. Ed. Joseph W. Wenzel. Annandale: Speech Communication Association, 1987. 387-393.
- Hunt, Steven. "CEDA's Place in Plethora of National Forensics Organizations." E-Mail to CEDA-L. Archived at: Beluga.uvm.edu. 27 July 1995.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

# THE FUTURE OF ACADEMIC DEBATE: CEDA'S DECLINE AND THE GROWTH OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

by  
Mark Crossman, Ed.D.  
El Camino College

Roughly twenty-five years after its creation, CEDA has come full circle in much of the West. Once the fastest growing debate activity, it has taken a back seat to parliamentary debate at many tournaments. While CEDA seems to be enjoying continued health in the Midwest and other regions with old and entrenched policy debate programs, the experience of California and regions which sponsor alternative debate organizations (NPDA, NEDA, ADA, etc.) seems to indicate that, where an alternative to CEDA exists, a following (sometimes large) is created. These developments, coupled with the agreement that NDT and CEDA would use a common policy topic, raise some interesting issues with regard to the future of those organizations and the debate community in general. While some might argue that the common topic represents a welcomed step toward rapprochement, I believe it is a sign that



CEDA is on the same perilous course that NDT has found so damaging. In the essay, I will argue that the defacto merger between NDT and CEDA occurred because CEDA evolved to mirror NDT, not the reverse. Further, I will contend that exclusionary practices entrenched in contemporary CEDA have and will continue to drive programs to parliamentary debate, and that, as a result, CEDA faces the same fate that NDT confronted during the past two decades. Finally, I will discuss some of the challenges facing parliamentary debate and their apparent in the academic debate community.

### **The Path Taken**

*No Longer Strange Bedfellows.* After more than two decades, CEDA now shares a topic with the organization from which it sought to distance itself for so many years. Rapprochement between the two organizations has occurred because CEDA has turned away from its founding principles to the point that NDT and CEDA are virtually identical in both pedagogy and practice. The identical nature of the events undoubtedly will continue to drive a structural merger of the two organizations. With the exception of the sponsoring different national tournaments, there seems little justifying the existence of separate organizations. The prospect of organizational merger is less significant, however, than the practices and philosophies which have brought CEDA to a place where rapprochement is possible. A comparison of CEDA founding principles with contemporary CEDA practices reflects the fact that CEDA has moved toward NDT, not the reverse. CEDA was developed because NDT did not offer a balanced approach to competitive debate. Nothing about contemporary NDT practice indicates that they now intend to do so. Early CEDA literature reflects the fact that directors were concerned about issues such as limited variety in topics, reliance on counter intuitive arguments, unscrutinized deferrals to authority (if its printed, it must be true) and general disdain for any requirement to communicate in the round (Tomlinson, 1981; Tomlinson, 1983). Additionally, practices such as mutual preference judging and strike sheets caused the NDT community to become increasingly insular and exclusionary (Rowland and Deatherage). In contrast to the perceived excesses of NDT, those who flocked to CEDA generally sought an activity which promoted analysis, the limited use of evidence, and an audience centered approach to delivery that would have the effect of welcoming a wide variety of judges (Howe). One of the reasons that CEDA worked was because coaches, who were primarily Speech Communication instructors, found that the activity complemented what they taught in their classrooms. A coach could spend an afternoon talking about audience analysis and delivery, and see similar principles reflected in competition. While there were always competitors who pushed the boundaries, there was a stabilizing influence provided by the majority of teams, coaches, and judges.

The second reason that CEDA worked was because it provided relatively easy access for students just learning the activity. Unlike NDT (and contemporary CEDA), there was not a lot of debate theory that one was required to know before debating. Additionally, single semester topics allowed for a balance between limited topics (making research burdens reasonable) and topics which were sufficiently broad to maintain interest (one limited topic all year would be boring). Students were drawn to the topics because they tended to concern issues to which they could relate. CEDA clearly was pedagogically different than NDT, and its differences made CEDA thrive.



By contrast, CEDA now finds itself thoroughly infested with the same practices and philosophies that lead to the near demise of NDT. Anyone who has judged a CEDA round in the last few years is well aware that what typically occurs bares little resemblance to CEDA's original intentions. Rapid rates of delivery, the unscrutinized deferral to authority, open hostility to the other team and the judge, and a general lack of decorum have become fairly common place (Steinfatt, 1990). I believe such practices both reflect CEDA's similarity to NDT and threaten the continued existence of the new "defacto" merged community.

*Marginalized Moderating Voices.* One of the most deleterious moves that CEDA has made toward NDT involves the contemporary role of the critic. CEDA's founders were committed to the idea that the judge should act as an educator, as well as a referee. Because CEDA began with specific goals for its participants (use of humor in rounds, reasonable rate, limited deferral to authority, reliance on analysis), it assumed the participation of activist critics who were willing to reward behaviors consistent with CEDA's objectives, and punish behavior deleterious to the activity and to the learning experience in the round. Given NDT's experience, it was obvious that constraint would have to be enforced by the judging community because it is not naturally demonstrated by the strategic choices made by debaters.

Like its NDT predecessor, contemporary CEDA is clearly moving toward greater exclusion of moderating voices in its judging pools (Rowland). Critics who maintain any of CEDA's original mandates with regard to delivery, evidence use, etc., are frequently openly challenged by debaters (and, at times, their coaches) to the extent that a genuinely hostile environment has been created for anyone who views their role as something more than referee. A director of a successful CEDA program related a story that I believe is becoming rather typical. At the first leg of a swing tournament this critic judged an affirmative team that spoke so incoherently that much of the evidence in the 1AC was not flowed. Relying on extension of that evidence to win the round, the team lost. Upon disclosure, the team was openly rude. The same critic had the misfortune of being assigned this team on the affirmative side at the second tournament of the swing. This time, the team conferred with their coach, walked into the room, faced the other team and indicated that they would forfeit the round rather than debate for "this guy, because he can't flow us anyway." It is troubling to me that students are permitted to behave this way. More troubling, however, is the fact that their coach was complicit in this behavior. I could cite a string of similar stories, but I'm sure readers familiar with judging CEDA in recent years, and sympathetic to the decline in decorum, can provide their own.

This evolution to a CEDA which both rejects its philosophical origins and excludes anyone who seeks to promote them is both the root of many of the excesses of contemporary CEDA debate, and an exigence which will drive many programs to alternative activities. Practices such as strike sheets and mutual preference judging are institutionalizing CEDA's exclusionary tendencies. As debaters are allowed to pick and choose who will judge them, the philosophy that debaters who debate well will be rewarded has been replaced by the notion that judges who please debaters may judge them again. The "original" CEDA cannot hope to rise from the ashes if it continues to devalue the role of judge as educator. Rather, by allowing the trend toward supporting only those critics who do not enforce educational standards in the



round, the organization will accelerate the behaviors that educational critics once attempted to contain. Fast, generic argument oriented debaters will argue for fast, generic argument oriented judges. While these "strategies" may be the tools of choice of the senior division national circuit, they deter the participation of students and coaches who are looking for something that better parallels the material they teach in Argumentation and other Speech Communication courses.

CEDA then, has moved to mirror the NDT practice of elevating a self defined elite while ostracizing those who prefer a more real world debate perspective. By making CEDA a hostile place for any who don't approve of its excesses, the organization is effectively saying that those who don't agree with the nature of contemporary CEDA can look elsewhere. This was the same message that the NDT community gave to those critical of its excesses, and a near death experience reflects the wisdom of that philosophy.

*The Novice Environment.* What has been created by CEDA's move to mirror NDT is an exigency similar to that which led to the founding of the organization. Many programs remain committed to the notion that debate should aspire to teach skills more readily transferable to the "real world" and many coaches now doubt that CEDA can foster those skills. These are, of course, the same concerns that created the environment which launched the birth of CEDA. In a paper presented at the 1996 SCA convention Winebrenner documents the narratives of 11 coaches who made the move from NDT to CEDA in the early years of the organization. Ten of those interviewed had been regional representatives to the executive council and six were past national presidents. Two of the themes that were fairly consistent across this distinguished group are particularly significant. First, their defections to CEDA tended to be driven by their perceptions that CEDA represented "better breeding ground for novice debaters." Second, if they were to start a debate program today, most of those interviewed would not choose CEDA. Even those who indicated that CEDA would be their choice had strong reservations. I believe that these narratives are representative of a growing cynicism concerning CEDA's ability to welcome and retain novice students and that cynicism is creating an environment ripe for the development and growth of models of debate that better meet the needs of new students.

From the perspective of programs fielding mostly novice teams, a major step on the path taken was the shift from semester topics to annual topics. Early in its existence, the CEDA organization accepted the principle that semester length topics promoted greater student interest and allowed for greater variety of material. From the perspective of a program that recruits and trains novices, I preferred the two topic system. I believe that the year long topic seems to encourage a broader topic. Though the organization might vote for a narrow semester topic, it seems unlikely that it would choose a narrow topic for an entire year. Broad topics generate a research burden that is, in my view, unreasonable. The research now required to be successful in CEDA competition is one of the organizations' greatest access barriers. Debate is necessarily a time consuming event. But the narrow semester topics that CEDA once used better accommodated the needs of students who were unlikely to make debate their primary academic activity — new students, working students, grade conscious students.



## FIGURE 1

### Participation in California CEDA Tournaments

Tournament	1994	1996	1994	1996
	CEDA	CEDA	PARL	PARL
Fresno State Raisin Center Invitational	68	38	na	49
Santa Rosa Junior College Invitational	41	26	na	58
Sacramento State Hornet Classic	60	25	na	na
PSCFA Fall Championships	94	22	na	61

One sign that many programs now find CEDA an unwelcome environment for novice debaters is the meteoric growth of parliamentary debate. While it has yet to spread to many regions of the country, where the format does exist it has proved a serious rival to CEDA and NDT debate. In only its second year in the two California regions, parliamentary debate is enjoying phenomenal success, outnumbering CEDA entries at virtually every tournament where it is offered. Figure 1 documents the rapid growth of parliamentary and the decline of CEDA at four of the major California fall semester tournaments. Since 1994, the year before parliamentary debate was introduced to the area, participation in CEDA debate has declined by an average of 54% per tournament. At the tournaments where it is offered, the number of teams participating in parliamentary debate has outnumbered those participating in CEDA by nearly a 2:1 margin. Even the sole tournament not offering a parliamentary debate division (Sacramento State) was affected by the shifting tide, as the total number of entries declined 58%. The picture is even more bleak when novice participation is examined. Figure 2 presents the data for novice divisions over the same period. Participation in CEDA divisions has declined an average of 68% per tournament, and parliamentary debate teams outnumber CEDA teams almost 3:1. Given that 1996 data include both NDT and CEDA teams, the relative decline in numbers is especially disturbing.

## FIGURE 2

### Novice Participation in California CEDA Tournaments

Tournament	1994	1996	1994	1996
	CEDA	CEDA	PARL	PARL
Fresno State Raisin Center Invitational	31	16	na	16
Santa Rosa Junior College Invitational	24	10	na	34
Sacramento State Hornet Classic	35	9	na	na
PSCFA Fall Championships	82	7	na	46



A debate activity that cannot recruit and train novice students will be replaced by one that can. While not the loudest voice in the new CEDA, the year colleges and other novice-oriented programs play a vital role in the organization. In regions where high school debate is not well supported, introductory debate instruction occurs at the post-secondary level. When the community does not accommodate novice students, ultimately there will be a smaller pool of experienced students from which open-oriented programs can draw their talent. If novice-oriented programs defect to other events, CEDA eventually will suffer the consequences which NDT experienced for so many years: It will become a small, national circuit oriented activity, populated only by a dwindling number of die hard programs.

CEDA entries at tournament that attract teams from regions with thriving high school feeder programs temporarily might remain healthy. Even in California, the circuit tournaments remain stable. But even programs from regions traditionally grounded in research-based debate eventually will defect if their budgets will not support the travel necessitated by dwindling regional tournaments.

### **Parliamentary Debate: The Promise and the Peril**

Like many who are in the process of converting their squads over to parliamentary debate, I do so with reservations. I am encouraged that many other coaches share my disdain for the false elitism that contemporary CEDA represents, but I am bothered that we seem to be replacing research-based debate with a model that forbids using the product of specific topic research. The ability to perform focused research is one of the more obvious measurable outcomes that academic debate has traditionally nurtured. I believe that many coaches have reached a point, however, where they believe that the research skills that CEDA offers are outweighed by its emphasis on practices that do little to prepare students for the types of public speaking experiences that they will face in the real world.

The future of parliamentary debate offers both promise and peril. I believe that the format could better meet the needs of its practitioners by adopting an evidence policy similar to extemporaneous speaking. Tournament directors could generate topics based on current event issues. Philosophical topics could be worded to encourage the use of current events as support. Evidence from periodical sources could be read in the round. These types of practices would, I believe, allow parliamentary to offer more of a balance between oratory and analysis.

I am sympathetic to the voices that oppose the introduction of evidence on the grounds that it might open the floodgates for many of the practices plaguing CEDA. I think, however, that parliamentary debate can avoid many of CEDA's problems by providing greater direction to those who coach and judge it. CEDA's objectives were initially very clear. It lacked, however, guidelines for evaluating the event, and those who joined the organization more out of concerns for institutional survival than pedagogical agreement took advantage of its open door policy. Parliamentary debate should be both optimistic and wary of its phenomenal success. If it fails to establish clear objectives and standards for acceptable practices, it may, like CEDA, mutate to represent little of what initially made it popular.



### Conclusion

The recent rapprochement between CEDA and NDT was made possible because CEDA evolved to mirror the activity from which it once distanced itself. The excesses of today's CEDA operate as barriers to novice students and others who prefer a style of debate more reflective of the real world. CEDA is dying in California, and much the same fate awaits other regions. After having participated in CEDA, both as a competitor and coach, for nearly fifteen years, I am saddened by the de-evolution and decline of an activity that was the closest thing to a "big tent" that the competitive debate community had to offer. CEDA in its best years provided excellent training in oratory, analysis, and the use of evidence for a wide range of students who had been effectively excluded from the NDT community. Now, as the practices of CEDA exclude those students, I can only hope that the leadership and judges of parliamentary debate will better remember their charge to shepherd an activity that seeks to be primarily educational and secondarily competitive.

### Works Cited

- Howe, Jack. "CEDA's Objectives: Lest We Forget." Contributions on the Philosophy and Practice of CEDA. Ed. Don Brownlee. N.p.: Cross Examination Debate Association, 1981: 1-3. (Mimeographed).
- Rowland, Robert. "The Practical Pedagogical Function of Academic Debate." *CEDA Yearbook* 16 (1995): 98-108.
- Rowland, Robert & Deatherage, Scott. "The Crisis in Policy Debate." *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 24 (1988): 246-250.
- Steinfatt, Thomas . "College Debate: A Quarter Century Later." *CEDA Yearbook* 11 (1990): 4-7.
- Tomlinson, James. "A Rationale for Developing a CEDA Program." Contributions on the Philosophy and Practice of CEDA. Ed. Don Brownlee. N.p.: Cross Examination Debate Association, 1981: 4-7. (Mimeographed).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Philosophy and Development of CEDA." *CEDA Yearbook* 4 (1983): 6-12.
- Winebrenner, T.C. "Expectations for CEDA Debate: The Historical Perspective." Paper presented at the 82nd meeting of the Speech Communication Association. San Diego, November 1996.



# RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE DEBATE AESTHETIC

Shawn Whalen, Ph.D.  
Mercer University

The common policy topic is likely the most visible and significant change in the intercollegiate debate community in more than twenty years. It marks what may very well be the end of more than two decades of rivalry between the CEDA and NDT organizations. As we explore new opportunities for cooperation and interaction, we can use the circumstances of the common topic to better understand the nature of the controversy that caused the initial split between the two organizations.

This essay seeks to explain how the common topic relates to the controversy that fueled division in intercollegiate debate. Neither organization is homogeneous. Consequently, both CEDA and NDT house multiple perspectives about what a proper debate aesthetic might be. Such clashes over the proper debate aesthetic were at the core of the initial division between CEDA and NDT. The common topic does not portend resolution to this controversy, but it does reflect a shift in the predominant aesthetic allegiance among CEDA members. The shift from an audience-centered aesthetic to an argument-technical aesthetic is an inevitable result of combining research based debate with an intensely competitive environment. The common topic has united educators who share a common debate aesthetic, while at the same time increasing the attraction of alternative formats which emphasize a contrary aesthetic.

At the outset, it is important to understand that as the larger academic debate community is not a cohesive entity, neither are the CEDA and NDT organizations. They cannot properly be understood as homogeneous; each are comprised of individual programs, directors, coaches, students, and alumni. Each individual actor embraces a multiple and varied set of values with regard to debate practice at any given moment. The totality of the individual in each set makes up what we call the community. As with any community, there are enough commonly held values that a degree of cohesion is established; however the nature of the cohesion changes from moment to moment. Some agreement might be reached, for example, on debate's ability to teach critical thinking, public speaking skills, and research techniques. While it is possible to identify some common values, beliefs about how those values should be reached will vary dramatically within a community. Beliefs will even change from moment to moment as individuals face different debate and educational circumstances. The students that make up the program, the resources provided by the institution, or even the last debate that one hears can change the way a director or coach advocates what should be emphasized in the ongoing effort to improve debate. This is tremendously significant because it is our individual advocacy that makes for change in debate communities. The battle that sustained the division between NDT and CEDA for over twenty years will continue, even if it is not waged from within those organizational camps. It is a battle over the proper aesthetic for debate practice, and the joint topic cannot resolve the issues central to the dispute. The dispute between an aesthetic which emphasizes persuasive speaking



ability and audience adaptation, and an aesthetic emphasizing evidentiary support, a precise flow of arguments, and strategy is continuing. The common topic is more likely a sign of the continuing dispute than it is a sign of convergence.

The ongoing dispute over the proper debate aesthetic has pitted those who would have academic debate competition reward persuasive speaking ability and audience adaptation more heavily, against those who would reward research skills and flow precision. Some defend an audience-centered aesthetic, while others prefer an argument-technician aesthetic. The competing aesthetics have been described as "rhetorical" on the one hand, and "dialectical" on the other (Frank; Trapp). In many respects, this "substance" versus "style" dichotomy reflects the 16th century rhetoric of Ramus which divided the disciplines of rhetoric and philosophy (Gill and Young; Winebrenner). The difficult part of resolving the dispute is that both camps, for the most part, embrace each other's objectives. Those who emphasize rhetorical style recognize the importance of having support for debaters' claims, and those who emphasize research-based argument recognize the importance of persuasively applying evidence in debates. Additionally, both believe that the best debaters in the community do it all.

In a recent conversation, some colleagues from traditionally CEDA programs voiced a concern that CEDA had lost some of its "core values" as rapprochement had been pursued. It seems likely that programs who have left CEDA for other organizations share this assumption. However, these core values have not been lost. Instead, the culture of competitive debate has shifted to prioritize argument construction ahead of audience adaptation. The same core values exist in CEDA; they likewise exist in NDT. The question is only one of priority. It is my belief that the shift in priorities is a necessary consequence of the circumstances facing intercollegiate debate today. At the heart of the shift is an emphasis on competitive success. As programs have attempted to gain administrative support for their efforts, many have used success in competition to justify resource additions. Additionally, the tournament experience for debaters seems to be increasingly devoted to measuring accomplishment by the win-loss column. Indeed, for many students (and coaches for that matter) competition is the primary motivation behind debate participation (Shea and Winebrenner). We may be able to imagine a debate community in which competitiveness plays a less significant role, but such a community would bear little resemblance to the CEDA and NDT communities as they exist today. Competition is so central that it transcends the two forces battling over the debate aesthetic. Our pedagogical disputes always center on what judges should reward. They do so because we recognize that debaters will conform to the expectations of their critics (Howe). Critics explain what wins and what loses, and debaters refine their practices to improve their chances to win. Coaches teach their students what wins debates, and students listen to judges in the hope of improving their chances to win. Improvement is measured by one's ability to better predict what debating practices produce victories.

Competition, then, pushes pedagogy. Judges are encouraged to specify more and more precisely why one team won and the other lost. Debaters use the explanations to guide future practice. The desire to predict competitive outcomes, then, has caused a significant portion of the community to prioritize evidentiary support and flow precision over persuasive speaking skills and audience adaptation. The common topic seems to be the natural result of that shift.



CEDA's split from NDT occurred when a portion of the NDT community felt that the debate aesthetic had shifted too greatly away from particular rhetorical principles. A heavy focus on evidence and speedy delivery were seen as detracting from skills some educators felt should be the primary benefits of debate participation. But, if there are two distinct visions of a proper debate aesthetic, why do we now see the beginnings of rapprochement? My contention is that over more than a twenty year period the CEDA community developed the same competition ethic previously identified with NDT. That ethic spawned a national tournament, and shortly thereafter a national circuit. As competitive success became more important to large sections of the CEDA community, the shift toward the argument-technician aesthetic and eventual rapprochement with NDT became inevitable. As the competition ethic develops, so too does the need to predict outcomes. Those who work the hardest at the activity ought to be able to see the greatest degree of improvement so that they are able to measure the value of the time they have invested in preparation. As debaters and coaches evaluate their preparation, they begin to make choices that effect the aesthetic of the community. Moreover, as critics make decisions in debates, it becomes increasingly necessary to explain how different preparation will improve a team's chance of winning. This, indeed, may be the most significant feature of the competition ethic. The more that the decision over who wins and who loses becomes the central focus of the debate, the more necessary it is to find seemingly more objective standards of evaluation. Additionally, when critics are pushed to explain how improvement can be achieved, the aesthetic which offers the critic a greater ability to articulate specifics will be preferred. This is especially true of researched based debate formats. Given that CEDA, as NDT before it, chose a debate format that relied heavily on research, it is not surprising that critics would eventually privilege the importance of evidence and argument construction over presentation style. The argument-technician aesthetic simply offers the appearance of greater objectivity and an easier avenue to articulating specific details that will enhance success. That is not to say that an argument-technician aesthetic is better than an audience-centered aesthetic, but it is to say that in a community driven by a competitive ethic, the argument-technician aesthetic is more functional and relevant to the lived experience of many debaters and coaches (Fiske).

Given this shift within the CEDA community, rapprochement with NDT was inevitable. The common topic makes sense because the organizational barriers that were once justified by distinct aesthetics no longer exist. It allows debate programs sharing the same debate aesthetic to maximize their resources by participating in tournaments formerly closed by organizational affiliation. One interesting feature of this initial step toward rapprochement is that it obscures the shift in aesthetic allegiance. The common topic allows CEDA programs from areas of the country not likely to experience heavy cross-over to continue to negotiate aesthetic differences regionally. In other words, pockets of the CEDA community that continue to prioritize the audience-centered aesthetic are not necessarily forced to confront the aesthetic shift of the larger organization. This may allow the CEDA community to avoid dramatic clashes over the debate aesthetic for the short term, but the long term implications of the relationship between a competition ethic and the debate aesthetic suggest a turbulent future.

Assuming that competition remains a central ethic in both the CEDA and NDT communities, the argument technician-aesthetic will continue to