

# Current Issues in the Cross Examination Debate Association

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In recent years no collegiate forensic organization has experienced the rapid growth and influx of new members that CEDA has been confronted with. In only thirteen years CEDA has been transformed from a small regional association into a large and complex national organization. It is no wonder that such rapid and continuing growth has presented the organization with problems and difficult choices. This paper is designed to examine some of the central areas of concern we must face in both short-term and long-term planning in CEDA. It will present an overview of CEDA, an examination of its evolution from a small scale to a large scale organization, and detail some of the significant issues CEDA must deal with.

The observations presented in this paper are the result of the author's involvement in CEDA, both as an undergraduate debater and as a university director of debate. It is hoped that these observations will contribute in a positive way to the continuing discussion of CEDA's development as an important collegiate organization. This paper is based on the premise that coaching philosophy is a key determinant of what competitive debate will find as acceptable behavior. It is the author's belief that many of the current problems in CEDA arise from a fundamental difference in the philosophy of many who coach teams that enter CEDA tournaments and the philosophy of the organization itself.

To place our discussion in an appropriate perspective, we must consider how and why CEDA began. Since 1920, American college debaters have been furnished with a national topic for competition.<sup>1</sup> This topic has provided the basis for a national championship in debate for individual teams since 1946.<sup>2</sup> This debate format and organization, which is now referred to as NDT, continues to be a

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<sup>1</sup>C. William Colburn, *Strategies of Educational Debate*, (Boston: Holbrook, 1972), p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Howe, *Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results*, vol. 14 (Long Beach, CA: privately published, 1975), p. 6.

substantial part of competitive collegiate debate. Despite the many positive influences that NDT has provided, there were a number of valid criticisms expressed as well. In the late 1960's, an increasing number of forensic directors and debaters were expressing concerns about the direction that collegiate debate was taking. There were apprehensions voiced about, traditional debate becoming too narrow in its topic and proposition selection, the excessive use of evidence, the highly specialized rapid delivery system, and a perceived decline in the use of analysis in debate rounds.<sup>3</sup> There was also a growing interest in the cross examination format. As a direct result of the concerns mentioned above, CEDA was established to provide debaters with viable and attractive alternatives.

Shortly after the announcement of the national topic for the 1971-72 debating year, Tim Browning developed plans for sponsoring an "off-topic" division of debate at the Desert Invitational Tournament at the University of Arizona. This off-topic division was an attempt to provide tournament participants with an alternative format to the NDT divisions. Encouraged by Browning's plans, Dr. Jack Howe from California State University-Long Beach suggested that a league should be formed in the southwest to guarantee continued alternative debate topics and formats. During the months of July and August 1971, Dr. Howe contacted a number of other forensic directors and found them enthusiastic about the idea of creating such an alternative debate league.<sup>4</sup>

On September 13, 1971, a "Statement of Principles" was distributed to the interested parties. Four major objectives for this new association were outlined:

1. To seek a method of restoring a better balance among evidentiary support, sound analysis, and effective delivery in debate than is currently encouraged by national propositions that emphasize evidence almost to the exclusion of these other areas.
2. To provide the opportunity for diversifying a student's collegiate debate experience by making available the cross examination format and by offering topics in addition to the national proposition.
3. To try and arouse an interest in debate among college students for whom a current national topic might have little appeal, by furnishing them with an alternative which may be more timely and interesting.

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<sup>3</sup>William Reynolds, "Theory and Practice in Forensics." In James H. McBath ed., *Forensics as Communication*. (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1975), p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>James Tomlinson. "A History of the Cross Examination Debate Association," unpublished paper, California State University, Long Beach, 1975, p. 3.

4. To create a healthy rivalry among debate squads, as opposed to that between individual teams, as schools compete in the standings for sweepstakes awards at the end of the season.<sup>5</sup>

The name proposed and subsequently adopted for the organization was the Southwestern Cross Examination Debate Association. Once formally organized, SCEDA attempted to translate these principles into reality. One major innovation of SCEDA was the decision to recognize a school's total performance over the entire year by awarding a championship to an institution's debate squad, rather than individual teams. Points for this championship were awarded on the basis of one point for each preliminary round won by a debate team and one point for each ballot awarded a team in elimination rounds. At the conclusion of the SCEDA debate season, the school with the most points would be awarded the championship.

The topic selected for use in the 1971-72 inaugural SCEDA season was, "RESOLVED: That the United States should withdraw all its ground combat forces from bases located outside the Western Hemisphere." The first SCEDA tournament was held at the University of the Pacific on November 12-13, 1971. In that first year, seven SCEDA tournaments were held, and debate teams from eighteen colleges and universities representing six states participated.<sup>6</sup>

As the association grew in membership and national appeal, a number of significant changes took place. During the 1972-73 season a new rule was developed which altered the method of point tabulation for the sweepstakes. Only the top two teams from each school participating in a particular tournament would be counted for the sweepstakes. This rule was designed to prevent a school from flooding a tournament with a large number of teams, therefore gathering sweepstakes points on the basis of the entry size rather than on the quality of the school's entry. Two more major events occurred in 1974. First, a constitution was adopted by members of the organization. Secondly, because SCEDA tournaments had begun to attract teams from all over the country, the organization's name was changed to the Cross Examination Debate Association. By the 1975-76 season, CEDA was growing at such a rapid pace that concern was expressed that only schools with large debate budgets could travel across the expanding circuit to gather sweep-

<sup>5</sup>J. H. Howe, "Statement of Principles," unpublished letter. Long Beach, CA, 13 September 1971.

<sup>6</sup>Tomlinson, "A History of the Cross Examination Debate Association," p. 4.

stakes points. The CEDA membership responded with a rule designed to help ensure that the quality of the performance would be the primary determinant of who won the championship, not the amount of money available for debate trips. The new rule dictated that for the sweepstakes totals, only the six best performances of each school over the entire year would be counted. Therefore, a school with limited resources that performed well in six CEDA tournaments would not be at a disadvantage when compared to a school which could attend a far greater number of tournaments.

As for CEDA's stated goal of offering college debaters a broader range of issues to consider, the association has made significant contributions. Although a non-policy proposition was used in 1921, each of the NDT national propositions since then have been ones relating to policy.<sup>7</sup> Recent attempts to include non-policy propositions in the NDT format have been actively opposed. There were some in the debate community who found this a stifling influence on the attempts to diversify the college debater's experience,<sup>8</sup> In CEDA's thirteen years, fifteen (out of a total of twenty) of the propositions selected for debate at the association's tournaments have been intentionally worded to be non-policy or value-oriented. The opportunity of debating a different type of proposition has been often cited as one of the primary attractions that CEDA holds for many debaters.<sup>9</sup>

Another early innovation concerning topic selection by CEDA, was the use of two topics in a single year. Between 1972 and 1975, one topic was debated for the fall semester and a second topic for the spring. The purpose of this dual topic approach was to shorten the length of time that a particular topic was debated, it was believed by many that, debating a single topic for an entire academic year was stimulating some of the abuses previously cited.<sup>10</sup> This two topic approach was abandoned in 1975 but reinstated in 1980.

As mentioned previously, a major concern of the early CEDA membership was the rapid delivery that has become characteristic of NDT. Many asked if debate can be used to demonstrate the values of research, sound logical argument, the use of evidence,

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<sup>7</sup>Colburn, *Strategies of Educational Debate*, p. 239.

<sup>8</sup>Beverly Kelley, "An Alternative to NDT Debate," In Don Brownlee, ed., *Contributions on the Philosophy and Practice of CEDA*, (CEDA, 1981), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup>Jan Vasilus, "Value Proposition Debate: A Pragmatic Approach," In, Don Brownlee, ed., *Perspectives on Non-Policy Argument*,(CEDA, 1980), p. 49.

<sup>10</sup>J. H. Howe, "Statement of Principles," unpublished letter, Long Beach, CA, 13 September 1971.

then why should it not also emphasize basic principles of effective delivery? Rieke and Sillars remind us that ". . . as in such specialized argument systems as law, educational debate has many unique protocols in communication."<sup>11</sup> Thus, in NDT today, the college debater is encouraged and rewarded in developing a highly specialized style of delivery characterized by its rapid pace. Freeley reports that some debaters have been "clocked" at 245 words per minute and notes that "... fractured language and stylistic faults are almost inevitable at such speeds."<sup>12</sup> An argument can certainly be made that this rapid delivery system is a natural part of the situational constraint placed upon the debaters in some competitive arenas. The major point made by many in CEDA has been that such an approach in the competitive arena is not necessary, and there are alternative models. CEDA has consistently attempted to place a value on a delivery approach suitable for a more generalized audience.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, while the National Developmental Conference on Forensics has recommended that ". . . more frequent use of alternative events and formats in forensics should be encouraged. . . ."<sup>14</sup> The use of a cross examination, or Oregon style, was rare in tournaments prior to 1975. Examining the 1974-75 debate season, we find two hundred and sixty-two debate tournaments sponsored nationwide. In only twenty-one (or 8%) of those tournaments was a cross examination format offered in at least one of the debate divisions. The decision to include cross examination in NDT debate was finally made in 1975. Some suggest this was in direct response to the rapid growth of CEDA. It should be noted that for the four years previous to that decision, CEDA had been providing a significant portion (fifteen out of the twenty-one, for 75%, in 1974-75) of the cross examination opportunities available to the college debater.<sup>15</sup>

From a modest beginning in 1971, only eleven member institutions from six states, CEDA now has a national membership of over 200 schools. Those institutions represent every section of the country. Appendix A details the annual growth of CEDA.

<sup>11</sup>Richard D. Rieke and Malcolm O. Sillars, *Argumentation and the Decision Making Process*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), p. 299.

<sup>12</sup>Austin J. Freeley, *Argumentation and Debate: Rational Decision Making*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1976), p. 396.

<sup>13</sup>J. H. Howe, "CEDA's Objectives: Lest We Forget," In Don Brownlee, ed., *Contributions on the Philosophy and Practice of CEDA*, (CEDA, 1981), pp. 1-3.

<sup>14</sup>*Forensics as Communication*, p. 325.

<sup>15</sup>Howe, *Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results*, p. 97.

Now that we have reviewed CEDA's past, we need to turn our attention to some of the current issues that will influence its future. For the purposes of this paper, these current issues have been placed into three topic areas; organizational growth, philosophical misperceptions, and the nature of value debate.

#### *Organizational Growth*

The original vision of CEDA was one of a regional association that was small enough to be easily and informally administered. The rapid and largely unexpected growth of the organization forced the association to not only adopt a constitution and bylaws, but to elect regional representatives. Any organization that moves so rapidly from a small scale to such a large scale must expect some stress to its administrative functions and even its goals and objectives as an organization.

CEDA has tried to reorganize its administrative units so that tabulation of results, approval of tournaments, and selection of topics continue to serve their original purpose. Even the initial idea of a single annual business meeting for the membership has been altered so that CEDA now holds multiple meetings, including one at Speech Communication Association conventions. Thus, it can be argued that the administrative functions of the organization have been altered to adapt to the new demands of the evolving and growing national association. To examine what has happened to the organization's goals, we need to look at how this rapid growth has led to misperceptions about the nature of CEDA debate.

#### *Philosophical Misperceptions*

A decade ago the most often heard question about CEDA was "what is CEDA?" Today the question seems to be "how can we join?" Therein lies a crucial problem. CEDA has become very popular, but is not very well understood. Initially, CEDA attracted members and participants to its tournaments who clearly shared strong philosophical commitment to debate which had the characteristics outlined by the "Statement of Principles" restated earlier in this paper. CEDA debates were noticeably different from NIT debates. That was no accident; it was the clear intention of the association. It was widely believed that CEDA would provide an alternative, not simply in topic and format (the use of cross examination) but also in philosophy. CEDA presented an alternative model of what debate could be like. CEDA debaters were encouraged to use a more audience centered delivery system and to rely on analysis and reasoning as well as accumulating evidence. These were seen as substantive, not cosmetic, differences with NDT debate.

Unfortunately, one early misconception was that CEDA required no evidence. During tournaments where new teams and coaches appeared, it was not unusual to find that a judge penalized a team for even using one piece of evidence. It was this misconception, and the increasing number of new schools participating, that stimulated the use of "Notes for Judges." (See Appendix C for a sample "Notes for Judges") These brief notes explained the basic philosophy of CEDA, so that judges would evaluate CEDA debates not on the basis of their experiences and expectations in NDT, or on some misperception of CEDA, but on the basis of what the association wanted CEDA debates to be characterized by. In addition, several tournament directors developed their own debate ballots to emphasize the criteria CEDA was promoting as an alternate model of debate.

While these remedies appeared to work for a while, they have apparently lost their usefulness. In a 1981 study of CEDA judges, Robert Norton found that only 27% of those surveyed agreed that the "Notes to Judges" influenced their judging of CEDA debates. Norton also reported that only 60% of the debate judges stated that they judged CEDA differently from NDT.<sup>16</sup> Norton's study was conducted at the University of Nevada-Reno debate tournament, certainly in CEDA's strongest area of the country. While 60% may seem a substantial figure, many would expect a much greater percentage of judges to view CEDA differently from NDT. If such a study were conducted that included more of the newer CEDA participants, especially from other regions of the country, it seems plausible that the results would reveal even fewer judges who approach CEDA and NDT differently. Norton's study and one conducted by Wayne Thompson, and others from Pi Kappa Delta, seem to support the general hypothesis that misperceptions about CEDA's approach to debate are an important problem.<sup>17</sup>

An organization is a social instrument which individuals choose to join because it satisfies some need through that membership. The satisfaction that individuals may receive from membership in an organization may come from two general categories: (1) a shared philosophical commitment to the organization's goals and objectives, and (2) some reward system which provides benefits not available outside the organization.<sup>18</sup> CEDA was envisaged as an

<sup>16</sup>Robert K. Norton, "Empirical Evidence on the Judging Criteria in Use in the Cross Examination Debate Association," *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta* 66 (Spring 1981), pp. 10-14.

<sup>17</sup>Wayne Thompson et al., "What is CEDA Debate?" *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta* 66 (Spring 1981), pp. 4-9.

<sup>18</sup>Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organizations* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964, pp. 4-5.

organization which would fulfill certain needs in the collegiate debate community that were not being addressed adequately by any other organization. Both the philosophical approach to debate and the unique reward system were seen as complementary and inseparable ingredients which would attract individuals to the organization. Over the years, it has been the innovative and unique system of rewards CEDA offers that has been the focus of most of the attention the association has received. National rankings (based on accumulated point totals) are regularly published, and awards are presented to several institutions each year not only for national performance but also for regional accomplishments. Creative and challenging debate topics are offered and non-policy propositions have been used.

Each of these unique qualities attest persuasively to the dynamic and creative nature of CEDA. Not surprisingly, these innovations seem to be the primary attraction for many who participate in CEDA. Perhaps the attraction of these reward systems, and how useful they prove in helping justify a debate budget, have overshadowed the philosophical foundations and fundamental goals of the organization. Thus, the organization has experienced growth in numbers, but may have suffered a loss in commitment to its original goals through the misperceptions recounted here. It must be recalled that CEDA's fundamental purpose was to provide a substantive and creative alternative to NDT. Its secondary purpose was to provide a wider system of rewards for debate programs.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Value-oriented Debate*

It is a common occurrence on the circuit and in journal articles to find CEDA and "value" debate mentioned as if the two are inseparable. Many seem to have the impression that CEDA was formed to present value debate opportunities to the collegiate debater. It is this incorrect assumption that leads some to believe that value and policy resolutions are the primary difference between CEDA and NDT. While CEDA has purposefully chosen value-oriented topics since 1975, CEDA's first six debate topics (1971-Fall 1975) were policy resolutions (see Appendix B for a complete list of all CEDA resolutions). It is vital for an adequate understanding of CEDA to appreciate that CEDA's basic philosophy of debate is applicable to non-policy and policy debate alike. The use of value-oriented topics in American collegiate debate is an innovation CEDA has been proud to claim. Since 1975, the literature on this area has greatly increased due to the awakened

<sup>19</sup>Howe, "CEDA's Objectives: Lest We Forget," pp. 1-3.

interest these topics have stimulated. Although it may be quite a long time before a single persuasive model of value debate emerges, this creative and fascinating process must be encouraged. The emergence of non-policy topics on the national level has generated innovative behavior by debaters and challenging new perspectives on what models of competitive debate may include.

Unfortunately, many in CEDA have opted for increased reliance on policy devices in their approach to CEDA's topics rather than take on the challenge of new and more appropriate devices for debating values. With the introduction of the first value-oriented topic in 1975, many in CEDA were excited by the prospect of approaching a topic in a new and creative manner. Plans were considered inappropriate devices for arguing values. Those debate teams that attempted to use plans found negative teams willing and able to demand that the affirmative meet the intent of the resolution and issue value based arguments rather than a policy manifestation of a value (the plan). CEDA judges invariably found those plans to be an inappropriate part of a debate over values. More recently, plans and other policy considerations (although thinly disguised), have reappeared in value debate. These devices are now becoming increasingly accepted by judges in CEDA rounds.

In previous discussions of how to deal with CEDA's topics, some of this author's colleagues have argued that their debaters have the right to treat any resolution in any way they choose. While this position seems defensible from a point of view that values creativity, the reality is that such a view has not encouraged new and innovative ways of arguing values, but simply reintroduced policy considerations and debate tactics which CEDA was formed to avoid. In addition, we cannot ignore the fact that the CEDA membership has consistently selected debate resolutions that have intentionally avoided the traditional wording of policy resolutions. To ignore the "intent of the resolution" is to ignore the basic goals of the organization itself. Some teams have tried to strike a balance by presenting both value criteria and a plan in the same affirmative presentation. Is it any wonder then, that there are those in CEDA who argue that rapid delivery and increased evidence reading have begun to emerge in CEDA?<sup>20</sup>

### *Conclusions*

In this paper it has been suggested that CEDA faces some important problems. It must be recognized that any growing, healthy, and dynamic organization may face similar difficulties.

<sup>20</sup>Howe, "CEDA's Objectives: Lest We Forget," pp. 1-3.

Fortunately, CEDA's challenge is to adapt to and manage growth, not decline. Organizational change must, however, be managed and monitored, especially when the fundamental goals of the organization are called into question.

For CEDA, the greatest challenge comes from the apparent difference in the philosophy of some who judge CEDA tournaments, and the fundamental goals of the association. Debaters are quick to adapt their behavior to that which will be rewarded by judges. No amount of restatement of the organization's goals will alter the current trend unless there is some influence on those who coach and judge in CEDA which will encourage them to adhere to those goals.

CEDA was created to provide alternatives for collegiate debaters. That purpose continues to serve as part of the organization's basic philosophy. The alternatives offered were intended to be far more than simply a different topic. CEDA intended to provide debaters with the opportunity to choose a debate style and philosophy which was unique. Most recently, it has become increasingly difficult to find anything to distinguish a CEDA debate from a NDT debate, *except* the topic. Such a blurring of the two approaches to debate services only to limit our choices and opportunities.

Unless the leadership and membership of CEDA recognize and clearly define the problems, there is little hope that solutions can be found. The organization is one that has shown remarkable growth and flexibility. It is now time to carefully assess the basic principles and goals of CEDA and stimulate interest and commitment to them. How this should be done will require a great deal of careful discussion and planning. Without such actions CEDA and NDT may well be "different" in name only. Such a situation would deny the opportunity for the alternative experiences in collegiate debate we all wish to preserve.

## APPENDIX A

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ANNUAL GROWTH OF CEDA

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Year	Number of schools participating in CEDA
1971-1972	18
1972-1973	25
1973-1974	28
1974-1975	47
1975-1976	50
1976-1977	60
1977-1978	62
1978-1979	119
1979-1980	173
1980-1981	207
1981-1982	239
1982-1983	257
1983-1984	273

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Sources: *CEDA Report*, final for each year 1972-1984.

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## APPENDIX B

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TOPICS SELECTED BY CEDA 1971-1984

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1971-1972		Resolved: That the United States should withdraw all its ground combat forces from bases located outside the Western hemisphere.
1972-1973	(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.
1973-1974	(Fall)	Resolved: That victimless crimes should be legalized.
	(Spring)	Resolved: That the United States should reduce its commitment to Israel.
1974-1975	(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.

- 1975-1976 Resolved: That education has failed its mission in the United States
- 1976-1977 Resolved: That legal protection of accused persons in the United States unnecessarily hinders law enforcement agencies.
- 1977-1978 Resolved: That affirmative action programs have been deleterious in their effects.
- 1978-1979 Resolved: That a United States foreign policy significantly decreased toward the furtherance of human rights is desirable.
- 1979-1980 Resolved: That compulsory national service for all qualified U.S. citizens is desirable.
- 1980-1981 (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.
- 1981-1982 (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.
- 1982-1983 (Fall) Resolved: That a unilateral freeze by the United States on the production and development of nuclear weapons would be desirable.
- (Spring) Resolved: That individual rights of privacy are more important than any other Constitutional right.
- 1983-1984 (Fall) Resolved: That U.S. higher education has sacrificed quality for institutional survival.
- (Spring) Resolved: That federal government censorship is justified to defend the national security of the United States.

## APPENDIX C

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 NOTES TO JUDGES  
 (representative sample)
 

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The Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) began its work in 1971 as a reaction to the direction being taken by national intercollegiate debate. It was apparent that increasingly fewer contemporary college students had the time or the interest required for amassing the thousands of evidence cards necessary for debate on traditional national topics. CEDA seeks to offer debaters an alternative.

CEDA encourages debaters to approach a resolution directly rather than developing the strained and narrow interpretations that have appeared in traditional debate. Such "squirrel" cases and the tendency for negative teams to "spread" are discouraged in CEDA. CEDA encourages debates which would be understood by an audience of laypersons, thus the over use of jargon and "oral shorthand" is discouraged.

Recently CEDA has chosen for its national topics, propositions of value. Probably the greatest advantage to this is that it removes the plan from the affirmative's obligations in a debate, and the plan attacks from the negatives. The reason for the excessive speed of many contemporary debaters is thus removed. Certainly CEDA debaters are expected to support the arguments they advance, but we strive for a judicious balance of evidence, analysis, reasoning, and persuasive delivery. The debate should not become an evidence reading session.

CEDA encourages judges to reward debaters who:

1. Use an effective delivery pattern that would be suitable for audience debate.
2. Address the debate topic directly and as a whole.
3. Present criteria and reasons for their positions.
4. Avoid the over-use of evidence.

CEDA tournaments are now offered in every section of the country. If you are interested in learning more about the association and its national sweepstakes awards, contact the Executive Secretary at the address below:

Dr. J. H. Howe Executive Secretary, CEDA  
 Department of Speech Communication  
 California State University—Long Beach  
 Long Beach, California 90840

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Source: Notes for judges, distributed at the 49'er Invitational Forensics Tournament, Cal State Long Beach, 1975 and 1976. Also used in other tournaments in the Southwest.

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