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Purdue University Forensics Conference

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We might reasonably expect that love would be myopic, but we can hardly justify its being totally blind. When the organization and conduct of activities place excessive emphasis on personal achievement as opposed to objective discussion, when schedules make it impossible to review both the form and content of the speech, and when minds are closed to honest criticism, there is little probability that our speaking will ever rise above the level of an interesting mental exercise involving the temporarily successful defense of an argument.

It is not the intention of this article to castigate tournament forensics without reservation. There is to be found in this type of activity much that is valuable. But we need to remember that the tournament is a means to an end and not an end in itself. We need to remember that tournaments generally are won by speaking to critic judges and many empty chairs. Our ultimate objective should be effective speaking before an audience. Let us provide more such opportunities in order that our students may experience the responsibility and the satisfaction that comes from intelligent discussion of a problem before interested people.

IV. There is yet another way in which we may lead students to identify themselves more closely with the problems of their society. That is by delegating definite responsibility for the administration of certain phases of the work. Granted that it may be easier for the director to attend to such matters himself, and that students will continue to be inept or fail in certain responsibilities, we recognize that the more closely one is identified with an activity the more important he feels it to be. A director does not sit apart, observing in a disinterested manner the feeble efforts of his students as they struggle to bring order to the program. He too

must be in the thick of the fight. But for students to experience the difficulties, disappointments, and plain hard work that go into administering a successful forensic program can be a very healthy thing. They may learn through experience the roles played by determination and faith in seeking to arouse people to cooperative effort.

V. A definite part of any forensic program is the director and his policies. His position is unique. Few faculty members are in a position to exert as subtle but powerful influence on students' thinking. He is in close and constant contact with students under conditions where his attitudes, opinions, and public positions are readily observed and frequently emulated. Consciously or otherwise many students will associate the value and vigor of forensic training with the use to which the director puts it. The respect which he commands on the campus, the constructive contributions he makes to the community, and the public positions which he takes on controversial issues are all weighed. Obviously our primary function as directors is not to crusade. It is to train young men and women in the arts of democracy. But at the same time it is good pedagogy to demonstrate that we can practice what we preach.

While making no pretense at being exhaustive, these suggestions are presented in the hope that they may stimulate further examination and evaluation of our programs. If by such means we are able to translate more effectively objectives into student-centered action, it will contribute in some measure to the attainment of greater objectivity, responsibility, and social consciousness on the part of our students. Our success will mean that we will have done something to make democracy work.

Purdue University Forensic Conference . . .

Twelve colleges and universities from many parts of the United States participated in the National Invitational Forensic Conference at Purdue University, November 4 and 5.

They were the University of Alabama, Boston University, University of Chicago, De Pauw, University of Kansas, Michigan State College, Notre Dame, United States Naval Academy, Wayne University, Western Michigan College, University of Wisconsin, and Purdue. Representatives of the United States Military Academy, who had planned to fly to the event, were grounded by bad weather.

Each of the participating institutions was represented by two affirmative and two negative speakers, who engaged in four rounds of debate on the national intercollegiate question of "Federal Aid for Education."

Three of the twenty-four teams emerged from the four rounds of debate undefeated: the Kansas and De Pauw affirmatives and the Notre Dame negative. Although no school was declared tournament victor, the four Notre Dame speakers amassed the highest point total, with Kansas second, and Alabama third.

Three of the four rounds of debate were held

in regular Purdue Speech, English, and Education classes. A critique and decision were given at the conclusion of each debate. The schedule was staggered, in order to permit debaters not engaged at a given hour to hear other teams in action.

Two seminar discussions were features of the conference. Professor E. C. Buehler, Kansas, President of Delta Sigma Rho, led a panel composed of Lt. Comdr. W. W. Evans, U. S. N., and William Birenbaum, Chicago, on "Interpretations of the National Question." "What can we do to Improve Debating?" was discussed by a panel composed of Dr. Winston L. Brembeck, Wisconsin; Prof. Austin J. Freeley, Boston; and Jack Murphy, Western Michigan. Both subjects provoked spirited discussion from debaters and coaches in attendance.

Dr. Alan H. Monroe, chairman of the Speech Department, Purdue University, was the banquet speaker.

The Conference was frankly experimental. Its objectives were, while de-emphasizing winning, to give the debaters a broader understanding of the question and concentrated practice with debate techniques in audience situations.