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# speaker and gavel

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The Media Controversy, Democracy and Spiro T. Agnew— Dan F. Hahn and Ruth M. Gonchar .....	21
The Debate Program at the University of Massachusetts— Ronald J. Malton .....	29
Parliamentary Debate is More Serious Than You Think: Forensics at the University of Chicago—Donald J. Bingle .....	36

# **SPEAKER and GAVEL**

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# Speaker and Gavel

Volume 15

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## THE MEDIA CONTROVERSY, DEMOCRACY AND SPIRO T. AGNEW

DAN F. HAHN AND RUTH M. GONCHAR

From the days of the "Fat Jap" through the "effete corps of impudent snobs," Spiro T. Agnew has been provocative in his use of language and argument. But never was his rhetoric more significant than in his attack upon the news media, for here he was attacking a major base from which Americans can develop argument. In two speeches during the month of November, 1969—the first to the Mid-West Regional Republican Committee Meeting in Des Moines, Iowa on November 13, and the second, a week later, to the Montgomery Alabama Chamber of Commerce, Agnew voiced his concern over the news media's power over American public opinion. When television subjected President Nixon's November 3, 1969 Vietnam War address to what Agnew called "instant analysis and querulous criticism," he sounded a warning:

When the President completed his address—an address that he spent weeks in preparing—his words and policies were subjected to instant analysis and querulous criticism. The audience of seventy million Americans—gathered to hear the President of the United States—was inherited by a small band of network commentators and self-appointed analysts, the majority of whom expressed, in one way or another, their hostility to what he had to say. . . .<sup>1</sup>

But the President of the United States has a right to communicate directly with the people who elected him, and the people of this country have a right to make up their own minds and form their own opinions about a Presidential Address without having the President's words and thoughts characterized through the prejudices of hostile critics before they can even be digested.<sup>2</sup>

Agnew leveled five major charges at the news media: they were too powerful, unfair in their presentation, not objective in their presentation,

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<sup>1</sup> Spiro T. Agnew, "Address to the Mid-West Regional Republican Committee Meeting," Des Moines, Iowa, November 13, 1969, p. 1. White House Press Release, cited hereafter as Agnew, "Des Moines Address."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

their political criticism was instant, and the criticism caused controversy which was unhealthy for the American public.

Now that Agnew can be looked at in retrospect, with emotions somewhat quieted, let us examine the validity of Agnew's arguments and the performance of the news media in those areas at which Agnew directed his criticism. We will focus our attention on the following five questions, all of which stem directly from Agnew's addresses and form the basis of his arguments: (1) Are the news media as powerful as Agnew assumed?; (2) Should criticism be instant?; (3) Are the news media as unfair as Agnew contended?; (4) Is objectivity in news presentation possible?; and (5) What is the role of controversy in a democratic society?

### Power of the Media

Agnew assigned an inordinate amount of power to the news media: e.g., through their selective processes, they determine what is news; through their presentation, they control public opinion. In fact, Agnew considered the power of the media ". . . to equal that of local, state and federal government combined."<sup>3</sup> That the news media are powerful is not questioned. That they are as powerful in the manner described by Agnew—able to control and change public opinion—is the issue in dispute. Neither history nor news media research supports Agnew's claim. Historically, newspapers have attempted to control the political opinions of their readers, yet they have not been successful. Except for 1964, a majority of newspapers have supported Republican presidential candidates in every election since 1932. However, during this period Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Carter were all elected. If newsmakers had the omnipotent power over public opinion Agnew argued that they had, none of these men would have been President. The print media, while unsuccessful, do attempt to affect elections; the electronic media, however, rarely make an explicit effort to support candidates. As late as 1966, only 57 percent of radio and television stations had ever editorialized; of those, only 10 percent had ever endorsed a political candidate and most endorsements were of local rather than national office-seekers.<sup>4</sup>

Research in mass media suggests that the listener, viewer, and reader effectively block attempts by the media to control public opinion. Agnew's argument assumed that media consumers do not utilize either intellectual or emotional filters. Yet we know that people employ selective attention and perception filters to resist dissonant communication—to say nothing of critical, reflective judgment. Consequently, according to Erwin Bettinghaus, "the major effect of the mass media is a reinforcement of opinions and attitudes already held rather than any massive changes in attitude."<sup>5</sup> The messages of the media do not convert people; people convert the messages of the media. If Agnew's argument were true, there would rarely be disagreement between the media and the people. Yet Agnew, himself, in a later argument attacking the unrepresentativeness of the media concluded, "The views of the fraternity do *not* represent the views of America. That is

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Edward W. Chester, *Radio, Television, and American Politics* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), pp. 190–191.

<sup>5</sup> Erwin P. Bettinghaus, *Persuasive Communication* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), p. 179.

why such a great gulf existed between how the nation received the President's Address—and how the networks reviewed it.”<sup>6</sup> Obviously, Agnew's two claims are contradictory; the media cannot both control public opinion and be out of step with it.

Agnew suggested a solution for this impasse, but in doing so, he created a new dilemma. He explained that: “As with other American institutions, perhaps it is time that the networks were made more responsive to the views of the nation and more responsible to the people they serve.”<sup>7</sup> But this poses a serious dilemma; how could the news media be made more responsive to the “views of the nation” when those views are unknown? Despite the fact that the Nixon Administration claimed to understand the views of the “silent majority,” Charles Frankel, political columnist for the *Saturday Review*, explained why the views of the people can never be known:

Majority opinion on a particular issue may not in fact express opinion on *that* specific issue. It may express the individual's sense that he should go along with a coalition of interests with which he is broadly sympathetic even if he disagrees with the particular policy at issue; it may reflect simply his judgment that he does not know enough to have a reliable opinion on the specific question he has been asked, and his decision, therefore, is to accept the opinion of people in authority.<sup>8</sup>

Even if the “views of the nation” could be determined, they should not necessarily be uncritically reinforced in commentary upon the news. If you took the solution Agnew argued for to either of its two logical conclusions, the result would be news by majority vote (Alexis de Toqueville's tyranny of the majority updated and institutionalized) or news by proportional representation. Agnew's argument that the media control public opinion is certainly suspect, his support of that argument flimsy, and his solution ineffective and probably damaging. We must conclude that the status quo, while not always producing ideal news broadcasts, at least gives us the possibility of some good, old-fashioned democratic picking and choosing among points of view.

But Agnew was right when he warned that “the American people should be made aware of the trend toward the monopolization of the great public information vehicles. . . .”<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Agnew turned this legitimate concern into a partisan political attack. He criticized the liberal *New York Times*, which is outsold by a two-to-one ratio in the New York City market by the conservative *Daily News*, a Hearst paper. He assailed the liberal *Washington Post* which is balanced by the *Washington Star* and the *Daily News*. In short, he assaulted only the liberal papers, thus encouraging a further monopoly of news opinion by conservative publishers and editors. Agnew omitted all mention of the Hearst empire, which was then a Nixon stronghold. He failed to cite the media holdings of conservative Samuel I.

<sup>6</sup> Agnew, “Des Moines Address,” p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Frankel, “The Silenced Majority,” *Saturday Review* (December 13, 1969), p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Spiro T. Agnew, Address to the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery, Alabama, November 20, 1969, p. 2. White House Press Release, cited hereafter as Agnew, “Montgomery Address.”

Newhouse, who controls the largest number of newspapers in the country;<sup>10</sup> and he did not report that in Iowa—the state in which he launched his attack on the media—conservative newspaper chains held a monopoly in three of the four largest cities.<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, Agnew ignored the Nixon Administration's support of the so-called "failing newspaper" bill which would legalize conservative newspaper monopolies in twenty-two cities. Interestingly, the Administration opposed the bill until Mr. Nixon was visited by Richard Berlin, president of the Hearst Corporation which insistently supported Nixon.<sup>12</sup>

Agnew's argument overstated the power of the news media—perhaps because he forgot there is still a variety of news sources; perhaps because he did not understand the elementary facts about selective attention and perception; perhaps because he intentionally exaggerated the power of the media for political purposes. At any rate, the news media do not have a stranglehold on the throat of public opinion as the Vice-President seemed to fear.

### Instant Criticism

Agnew was prompted to argue against instant criticism after unflattering news commentary immediately following President Nixon's Vietnam War speech of November 3, 1969. In evaluating Agnew's criticism of news commentary, it is necessary to examine the arguments he raised. Was the analysis instant? Were the analysts self-appointed? Should the analysis be beamed to an audience inherited from the Presidential magnet? And, most importantly, should the audience be left to make its own decision without the benefit of news analysis?

The analysis was not really "instant." The President's November 3rd address was released to journalists more than an hour before it was given. Additionally, there was a White House briefing on the subject before the address was presented.<sup>13</sup> If the Nixon Administration had wanted to avoid this short-term analysis, it could have released the speech text even earlier. In fact, Nixon's staff released the speech text even later than previous practice before Presidential addresses, suggesting that their concern was not with improving "instant analysis" but with eliminating all analysis.

The phrase "instant analysis" by "self-appointed critics" conjures up the image of someone totally unprepared to offer informed criticism. However, the commentators were men with many years of political experience and preparation. Take, for instance, the ABC analysis team which Agnew singled out for special condemnation. William Lawrence had been a White House correspondent for almost twenty years. John Scali, a specialist in State Department affairs, and, later, American ambassador to the United Nations, had been around just as long. Averill Harriman, of course, was the chief United States negotiator at the Paris Peace Conference. Mr. Harriman did not volunteer his services; he was hired to analyze the speech because of his expertise. Similarly, Lawrence and Scali were not self-

<sup>10</sup> John Tebbel, "Press Power Revisited," *Saturday Review* (June 13, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> Morton Muntz, "Spiro Agnew's Candles," *New Republic* (January 17, 1970), pp. 13-14.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen R. Burnett, "Mr. Agnew's Oversights," *Nation* (January 26, 1970), pp. 73-74.

<sup>13</sup> Fred W. Friendly, "Some Sober Second Thoughts on Vice-President Agnew," *Saturday Review* (December 13, 1969), p. 62.

appointed critics; they were chosen by ABC for their knowledge and abilities.

Quite contrary to Agnew's claim, the analysis ought to be beamed at an inherited audience. These are the people who are most interested in the subject matter under discussion—a subject which had been advertised for days. In addition, it is more convenient for this audience to continue focusing on the subject than to gather again hours or days later. Besides, whatever one thinks of the theories of Marshall McLuhan, part of the message of television is its ability to be instantaneous; for it to slow down to the pace of the print media would be to waste its potential.

Finally, members of the audience ought not be left alone to make their decision on the President's policies without the benefit of news commentary. They may choose, as 18 million did following President Nixon's November 3, 1969 address, not to listen to the discussion, but if they want to hear the President's address analyzed, they should have that option, too. Further, Agnew's call for analysis after people have formed their opinion impugns the function of discussion and deliberation. We need information and analysis prior to decision-making, not after. Within reasonable limits, the more information people have, the better the decision.

Agnew's argument about the power of the media to destroy the effectiveness of a Presidential address is ill-founded. His analysis, once again, overlooks the audience's initial abilities, their predisposition and their selectivity. Even if his perceptions of a *tabula rasa* audience were correct, instant criticism would be necessary because the audience would need information.

### Are the Media Fair?

Agnew implied that it was unfair of the networks to subject Nixon's speech to criticism. Yet, as Tom Wicker of the *New York Times* remarked, ". . . Mr. Agnew was really suggesting that television should serve Government's conception of the national interest, and some consensus notion of the 'views of America.'" <sup>14</sup> This position seems to be an occupational hazard of those in power—always thinking that the media should serve as passive and conforming conductors for the office-holders. It was a viewpoint taken by both Kennedy and Johnson, who were quick to place a telephone call to a journalist or network taking positions they did not like. Despite the popularity of this view among the powerful, it is the duty of the media to resist the temptation to "go along in order to get along." Agnew presented the animosity of the media as dangerous—but the real danger to democracy arises when that animosity is replaced by coziness.

The Vice-President further argued that media criticism of the Nixon address was unprecedented. "When President Kennedy rallied the Nation in the Cuban Missile Crisis," Agnew asserted, "his address to the people was not chewed over by a roundtable of critics who disparaged the course of action he had asked America to follow."<sup>15</sup> Fred Friendly has responded that exactly this sort of criticism of the Kennedy speech had been provided by Sander Vanocur, Ray Scherer, Frank McGee, David Schoenbrun, Roger Mudd, George Herman, Richard C. Hottelet, and Douglas Edwards.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Tom Wicker, "In the Nation: Dr. Agnew's Patent Medicine," *New York Times*, November 16, 1969, p. E3.

<sup>15</sup> Agnew, "Des Moines Address," p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Friendly, "Some Sober Second Thoughts," p. 61.



Criticism of Presidential addresses was not something new instigated by media barons who disliked Richard Nixon. Republican Senator Homer Capehart of Indiana criticized Kennedy's 1962 speech on the state of the economy; Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois and Congressman Charles Hallack of Indiana, and, later, Dirksen and Senator Gerald Ford of Michigan constantly responded to speeches by President Johnson.<sup>17</sup> Apparently Agnew did not object to Republican instant analysis.

Agnew listed numerous examples of "unfair" network commentary: "one commentator twice contradicted the President"; "another challenged the President's ability as a politician"; and "a third asserted that the President was not 'following the Pentagon line.'" Agnew was particularly displeased with Averill Harriman who, he charged, had "attacked the Thieu government as unrepresentative," "criticized the President's speech for various deficiencies," "twice issued a call to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to debate Vietnam once again," and asserted "that the Viet Cong or North Vietnam did not really want a military takeover of South Vietnam."<sup>18</sup>

Nowhere did Agnew address himself to the arguments he listed: when the commentator contradicted the President, who was correct? Were Nixon's political abilities unchallengeable? Was the Thieu government representative? Agnew could have attempted to demonstrate that the media were unfair by refuting their statements. He did not choose to do so. Instead, he merely catalogued his grievances, and went on—thereby begging the question.

In attempting to prove that the media were unfair, the Vice-President argued the Chicago police were slandered by network coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention. That is a point on which men of good will can disagree.<sup>19</sup> But it is certainly true that news coverage in the days that followed the convention favored the police. A film defending the police provided by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley was voluntarily carried by 157 stations across the country, while the American Civil Liberties Union's film trying to present the dissenter's viewpoint was carried by only 12 stations.<sup>20</sup> In the heat of the moment the media may have inadvertently been unfair to the Chicago police, but the cold dawn that followed their reporting did not justify Agnew's charge that ". . . more than equal time [has] gone to that minority of Americans who specialize in attacking the United States, its institutions and its citizens."<sup>21</sup>

### Objective News

One suspects that Agnew perceived much news as being unfair because he assumed that total objectivity in news reporting was both possible and desirable. He suggested that the American people "can let the networks know that they want their news straight and objective."<sup>22</sup> Clearly, he

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Agnew, "Des Moines Address," pp. 1–2.

<sup>19</sup> This position seems to be substantiated by Daniel Walker, ed., *Rights in Conflict: The Violent Confrontation in Chicago During the Week of the Democratic National Convention of 1968: A Report . . . to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 287–331.

<sup>20</sup> Marvin Barrett, "Introduction," in Marvin Barrett (ed.) *Survey of Broadcast Journalism, 1968–1969* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1969), p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Agnew, "Des Moines Address," p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

thought the networks could oblige that demand by hiring people who were not contaminated by the liberal environs of New York City and Washington and by clearly separating news from commentary. While it may be true that the likes of Chet Huntley, David Brinkley, Walter Cronkite, and Harry Reasoner are slightly more liberal than the majority of the country, it is also true that they are slightly more conservative than the liberal leaders of New York City and Washington, D.C. They are more liberal than the general populace to about the same degree that most national personages are more liberal than the people "back home." There seems to be something about the responsibility of national leadership that slowly chips away old *laissez-faire* and states' rights positions. Southern senators tend to become more liberal than southern governors; national officers in pressure groups tend to become more liberal than their state and local counterparts; national reporters tend to become more liberal than local reporters. One would speculate that national news commentators would be more liberal than local station announcers even if the media industry were headquartered in Eric Sevareid's home town of Velva, North Dakota.

As for separating news from commentary, it must be understood that total objectivity in news presentation, like complete objectivity in any endeavor, is an impossibility. After all, the decision to spend two minutes on the most recent Supreme Court decision rather than ten minutes is, in a way, a subjective commentary on the importance of the event. The questions that concern newsmen ("who, what, where, when, and why") are inherently subjective. The desire to separate completely news from commentary is a pipedream. While "hard news" will always be influenced by subjective decisions, confusion can be reduced by separating it from interpretive news reporting. Both include subjectivity, but in hard news it has been eliminated to the degree humanly possible, as it should; in interpretation the subjective viewpoint is utilized to put the news into focus, which is what makes it commentary rather than news. In treating these two types of subjectivity as identical (and equally reprehensible) Agnew performed a disservice to the continuing debate on the responsibilities of the media and grossly misled his audience.

### Role of Controversy

It is difficult to discover Agnew's position on the question of the role of controversy in a democratic society. At one point he argued that too much controversy interferes with our "national search for internal peace and stability."<sup>23</sup> Yet, when his speeches stirred controversy, he defended himself by saying that he had a right to voice his views just as much as did the "young Americans," a group he had earlier called an "effete corps of impudent snobs," who marched on Washington.<sup>24</sup> His ambivalence seemed to be based on the conflict between his general democratic ideology and his specific partisan position. The first says that controversy is healthy; the second dictates that controversy endangers specific politicians and programs. Unfortunately, his attack upon the media was launched from the second position, and Americans must insist that our leaders not allow their desires for contemporary partisan advantage to override their long-term commitment to the democratic ethic. The critical act assumes some measure of disagreement. On a subject as controversial as Vietnam, the subject

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Agnew, "Montgomery Address," p. 6.

of Nixon's November 3, 1969 address, the media would shirk their responsibilities if they failed to present at least two sides of the controversy.

American citizens also ought to insist that their political leaders do not subvert controversy, as Agnew attempted to do on the Vietnam issue. He tried to suffocate disagreement by defining the contenders as the disloyal, impudent and effete versus the loyal, honest and virile. "To put the alternatives in this way," as Charles Frankel has observed, "is to shut reasonable men, who think there are really other actions, out of the debate."<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, before the debate was closed completely, Agnew's improprieties were discovered and he was forced to resign. Once discredited, Agnew no longer was persuasive to most Americans and no longer held sway over news presentation.<sup>26</sup>

The evolution of freedom of expression, especially freedom of expression through the press, has been slow and painful, and we cannot afford to regress into acquiescence in response to criticism from government officials. Agnew's arguments are insufficient and unacceptable in a society which welcomes debate and open controversy.

<sup>25</sup> Frankel, "The Silenced Majority," p. 51.

<sup>26</sup> There seems to be evidence to indicate that the two Agnew speeches did have at least a temporary effect of muzzling administrative criticism in news presentations: the NBC affiliate in Corpus Christi, Texas announced several days after the Agnew speeches that it would no longer carry any commentary after Presidential addresses and at the national level, commentary all but disappeared after Presidential addresses; summaries were instituted in place of analysis and most of these summaries were in-house jobs—no network hired an outside figure. See Dorothy Stanich, "Letter to the Communications Editor," *Saturday Review* (January 17, 1970), p. 58, and Harriet Van Horne, "Voices of Peace," *New York Post*, May 4, 1970, p. 34. Of course, the situation regarding analysis changed rapidly after Agnew's resignation and the Watergate break-in.

## THE DEBATE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

RONALD J. MATLON

In a time of vigorous and sometimes violent controversy, we must stop to ask ourselves: What kind of mental activities will we require of ourselves before we accept an idea, follow a leader, embrace a plan of action, or embark on a way of life? Will we commit resources to provide a testing ground for reasoned persuasion?

The discipline of speech communication and its subset, forensics or debate, have traditionally been concerned with the giving of good reasons: good reasons why men should act, good reasons why one particular action rather than another should be taken, and good reasons why that action should be judged in a certain way. In short, speech communication and forensics have traditionally been concerned with reasoned persuasion; and in any consideration of reasoned persuasion, the study of argument is a major concern. Academic debate is a particular application of theories of argumentation.

This conception of debate is the foundation for the forensics program at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Theories of argumentation with their focus on reason-giving tie our debate program closely to the University's Department of Communication Studies. This link to the department was strengthened by the former head of the Rhetoric and Public Address area of the department, Malcolm O. Sillars. His philosophy of the role of forensics in an undergraduate education became part of the department's mission. As Sillars later wrote:

Forensics needs to be seen as a practical subset of speech communication, as a valuable and practical experience for students. Its presence in a department provides diversity of experience, and will make, in the long run, for a better application of understanding of principles of communication. In addition, programs are important as a recruitment factor, and well worth the investment involved in drawing into the department some of the finest students in the University.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Communication Studies at the University of Massachusetts has heeded these words and in committing resources to our academic debate program both the Department and University have provided a useful testing ground for reasoned persuasion. This article examines the forensics program at the University of Massachusetts: its history, goals, debating activities, service and curricular activities, and staff and budget.

### History of the Program

Although we now call our debate organization the Debate Union; earlier, it was the Forensic Team, the Debate Society, and even the Forensic Art-

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<sup>1</sup>Forensics and the Department Administrator," *Association for Communication Administration Bulletin*, No. 16 (April 1976), 60.

ists! Debating at the University of Massachusetts had its beginning in 1909. Our first intercollegiate debate at what was then Massachusetts Agricultural College was against Bates College. The proposition was that fraternities should be abolished; the top prizes were gold medals and cash awards! In 1910, a faculty committee decided to recognize the team's efforts and gave them credit which fulfilled requirements in either English or Public Speaking.

In the early years, Calvin Coolidge, then mayor of nearby Northampton, was the presiding officer and occasional coach of the debaters. All debates were before rather large audiences. There were three people on each team; music was usually provided before the speaking; the stage was decorated with palms and ferns. The topics included such matters as liquor being a curse and our involvement in World War I being unwise.

Walter "Bull" Prince, a Professor in the English Department, became faculty advisor to the debaters in 1921. He began a series of on-campus oratorical contests and formed several triangular debate leagues with nearby institutions. In 1931, Professor Prince began a series of Southern tours for the University debaters. These tours involved students in numerous audience debates on other campuses; some as far away as South Carolina. But, by 1944, the debate team had gone out of business, due to World War II.

In 1956, debate reappeared at the University of Massachusetts within the newly created Department of Speech. In 1965 our forensics program became affiliated with Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha. The present director of debate came on the scene in the fall of 1966 and in the past eleven years has been able to expand the tournament program, initiate an off-campus and on-campus audience debate program, create several on-campus debate tournaments, begin a debate alumni association, strengthen the curriculum in the discipline of argumentation, increase the resources our University commits to the program, and initiate a summer workshop for high school debaters. All of this has been done with one primary purpose in mind: to further the education of all students who wish to participate in activities which will "stretch their minds" regarding theories of reasoned persuasion.

### Goals of the Program

Debaters at the University of Massachusetts always seem to vary in their motivations, interests, and abilities. Some wish to listen to speeches, others wish to speak; some to a limited extent, others to a very substantial extent. Some prefer tournament activities; some prefer audience situations; some prefer a combination. Attempts are made in the Massachusetts debate program to adapt to varying student interests, needs, and abilities. The general goals our program serves are to help students to:

1. Develop abilities in analysis, reasoning, and refutation that are applicable to informed, responsible controversy however and wherever it takes place.
2. Develop attitudes such as: concern for reasoned discourse, willingness to view all sides of a question, and respect for those who effectively espouse views different from one's own.
3. Learn to do research and gain an in-depth perspective on significant social issues through a logically rigorous forum.
4. Develop insights into the forms and materials of proof as they affect the attitudes and behaviors of listeners.

5. Gain immediate evaluation of ideas and speaking skills by both critics-judges and general audiences by using different speaking situations.
6. Develop self-confidence and poise in speaking; that is, to help students become adept in language use and delivery so that argument can be presented persuasively.
7. Become more critical listeners.

Of course, students who participate in academic debate often achieve a sense of competition and personal achievement; they also attain friendship and recognition from individuals at other schools. These are in no way unimportant personal possessions.

In order to achieve these goals, the debate program strives to (1) provide ample opportunities to participate in intercollegiate tournament debate and (2) provide ample opportunities to participate before a variety of on-campus and off-campus audiences and become recognized as a body which rationally deliberates significant contemporary issues.

### Debating Activities in the Program

The program philosophy noted above seems similar to one expressed in a recent issue of this journal by Robert L. Kemp regarding the University of Iowa forensics program. We believe, as he does, that tournament debate must be a foundation for participation in audience debates. "The core of the [audience] activity must come from a good strong program of intercollegiate debate, in which students are motivated and trained in analysis, use of evidence, and debate techniques."<sup>2</sup> Given that basic philosophy, opportunities for both kinds of experiences in debate are provided at Massachusetts for as many interested students as possible. All are eligible for one credit per semester if they meet minimal expectations set by the staff.

Students entering the program with little or no forensic experience are offered the equivalent of a basic course in argumentation. About 95% of the 19,000 undergraduates at the University are from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A vast majority of them have not had high school debate training and this is equally true of the students in our program. Therefore, a basic argumentation course must be taught to most of the students who join the Debate Union. In this course, our staff team teaches the fundamentals of critical analysis, construction and refutation of arguments, evidence selection, and the use of audience values as warrants for belief. At a certain point in their learning, students are ready to test their newly acquired understanding of argumentation theory. We have found the debate tournament to be the most appropriate laboratory for testing one's skills. Therefore we send about 25-30 individuals to novice and medium-level varsity tournaments in the East during their first semester or year in the program. We call this "Phase One" in our program model.

"Phase Two" of the model offers two separate alternatives to the debater with previous forensic experience. (The "previous experience" may be obtained either in our basic course program or at another institution.) One alternative is the varsity tournament track; the other alternative is the public forum or audience debate track. Students are not "frozen" into one of the alternatives throughout the remainder of their debate career, but are strongly encouraged to participate in only one alternative at a time because

<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Kemp, "Forensics at the University of Iowa," *Speaker and Gavel*, 16 (1976), 20.

of the time commitment which must be made in order to do justice to either aspect of the program.

Approximately 12–15 students participate in our Public Debate Program at any one time. This program has the dual advantage of continuing the student's education in argumentation while providing an important service dimension for the Department and the University. Our Public Debate Program emphasizes training in the development of forensics skills with general audiences such as would be found in high school assemblies, service club meetings, senior citizen gatherings, prison programs, on-campus classes, and media events. Audience debating has the added advantage of allowing our students to share their research and analysis with others, thereby contributing to the development of a more informed citizenry.

Propositions for the Public Debate Program are chosen by the participating debaters. We limit our yearly selection to three or four topics advertised to interested audiences. Our students appear before 30 to 40 audiences annually. Most of the debates are among our own students although, on occasion, we will arrange an audience debate with some other institution in a setting such as the Boston Kiwanis Club or a high school. When we visit the secondary schools, we give initial preference to those in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In many cases, we assist them in developing their own forensics programs by talking with their administrators and faculty about courses in speech and co-curricular activities in forensics.

The other alternative for the student is our varsity debate tournament squad. This group participates at the highest levels of national activity. Usually six to eight individuals become involved each season in top-flight tournament debate. This past year we attended 29 intercollegiate tournaments where our students participated in 470 rounds of debate against 124 other colleges and universities from 36 states plus the District of Columbia.

Participating at this level of activity can be quite demanding for the student and it takes an extraordinary individual who can make this work commitment. There is no doubt that some of the brightest, hardest-working students in our undergraduate population decide to participate in this aspect of our debate program. They not only bring national recognition to our debate program, our graduate program, and our University, but also over a period of years, establish for themselves a solid reputation as academic debaters. They also become intellectually stimulated by all the fine minds found among the debaters and coaches who travel the national circuit. We have found top-level tournament debating to be an outstanding means for encouraging undergraduates to develop specialized argumentation (reason-giving) talents to their fullest potential. In other words, the seven goals our program serves seem to be attained best through the varsity tournament debate program.

### Service and Curricular-Related Activities in the Program

There are numerous other activities associated with our debate program which lie outside the basic program model. These seem to fall into two categories: those activities which serve forensics generally and those activities which stress the curricular materials that tie to forensics.

Three kinds of service activities are sponsored. First, we give annual awards to outstanding present and past program participants in order to encourage excellence. Recognition goes annually to the outstanding senior, to the best audience debaters, to our top novices, to distinguished alumni, and to those who achieve the honor of membership into Delta Sigma Rho-

Tau Kappa Alpha. Second, we print two annual newsletters for the Debate Union Alumni Association, an organization of past participants which now has about 150 members. This on-going communication has kept our debaters close to each other and to the program. We have our share of social occasions as well. One of the things our participants strive for within the squad is cooperation, not competition. The result has been that we have what we believe is a socially cohesive collection of individuals. As one of our Deans recently remarked: "You certainly have established a spirit seldom seen among academic groups at large institutions such as ours!"

Third, we host several different kinds of forensics tournaments and institutes on our campus in the belief that we have a responsibility to host events of this kind for our debate colleagues at other institutions. Our November high school debate tournament is one of the largest in the United States: last year nearly 700 debaters and coaches were represented. Each December we sponsor a one-day college novice debate tournament with a similar two-day event each March. We also host special events when requested to do so, such as the District VIII National Debate Tournament qualifying tournament, the National Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha Conference, or the state finals in speech and debate for high school students. Our August debate workshop for high schoolers draws fifty to eighty individuals from all parts of the United States.

Other activities related to our program tie us to the department curriculum. For instance, we offer several related undergraduate and graduate courses in areas of argumentation. These include courses in "Sources, Uses, and Credibility of Public Information" and "Communication and the Legal Process," as well as instruction to our Communication Education majors and visiting teachers in "Directing the Forensics Program." Our debaters and staff also promote departmental research and scholarship in argumentation theory and the effects of argumentation practice. Our undergraduates, graduates, and faculty are strongly encouraged to do research in forensics education. The debate program serves as a laboratory for such scholarship. Studies have been conducted by our debaters and staff on judging philosophies in debate, interpersonal relationships among debaters, national trends in summer debate institutes, and a multivariate analysis of argument perception. We believe we are achieving one objective of the recently concluded Sedalia Conference, namely, "All members of the forensics community should be acquainted with, and should feel a responsibility to contribute to, research and scholarship."<sup>3</sup>

#### Staff and Budget for the Program

There are four members of the instructional staff assigned to the University of Massachusetts debate program. The Director of Debate teaches six semester hours and is given three semester hours of released time to work with forensics.<sup>4</sup> Three teaching assistants are also assigned to the forensics program each year. They are graduate students in the Department of Communication Studies working on their M.A. or Ph.D. degrees. They each work approximately twenty hours a week in the debate program and

<sup>3</sup> James H. McBath (ed.), *Forensics as Communication: The Argumentative Perspective* (Skokie: National Textbook Company, 1975), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> As most forensics directors know, three hours of released time is inadequate. During an average week, I spend forty-three hours of my time working in our debate program.



have no other departmental responsibilities. They are each paid \$3600 a year and given a full tuition waiver for their services.

Approximately one-third of total faculty time is spent working with "Phase One" students while the remaining two-thirds of staff time is equally divided between varsity tournament debate and the Public Debate Program. Within this breakdown by time, the duties of each staff member vary. The Director of Debate assumes full responsibility for overall program administration. To assist him in that role, the Debate Union members elect a president and treasurer of the organization. One work-study student is assigned to the forensics program and this individual devotes approximately twenty hours a week to secretarial duties.<sup>5</sup> Departmental secretaries also assist in covering any administrative overload. All four staff members assume some role in audience debate program administration and travel, tournament debate program administration and travel, on-campus tournament and audience program management, teaching argument to novices, coaching audience debate program participants, and coaching tournament debate program participants. Each staff member has his or her own "mini-squad" to coach, although we all listen to every tournament and audience participant in practice debates. Every two weeks the staff meets to discuss objectives, plans, and problems. We have very few general meetings with the debaters.

The annual budget for the University of Massachusetts debate program is quite complex. Our income (excluding an appropriation for faculty and secretarial salaries) comes from several sources. Most of our funds come from the University administration. Because our debaters participate twice a year in the Alumni Phonathon, the Alumni Office channels funds to the Provost who filters approximately \$7500 down through the Dean to the Department to us. If we qualify for the National Debate Tournament, the Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences appropriates monies which pay for that trip as well. An additional \$200.00 comes to us directly from alumni gifts. The Student Government Association awards \$600.00 to the debate program, and the Public Debate Program brings in \$500.00 from a \$25.00 fee charged to those groups before whom we appear. The tournaments we sponsor usually gain profits of \$500.00. Finally, we prepare materials for high school debaters which we sell at a profit of approximately \$600.00. The Department of Communication Studies allocates to us about \$700.00 a year to be spent on printing, postage, and supplies. Thus, without staff and secretarial assistance, we have an income which is roughly \$11,000.00 a year. With staff and secretarial assistance, our budget approaches \$28,500.00.

This may seem like a large budget, but it never seems to go far enough when forty to fifty students a year participate in our debate program. Ninety percent of the non-personnel funds go for travel expenses. Yet we are unable to purchase any meals for those who travel and debaters are expected to buy all their own supplies (cards, ditto masters, etc.). In summary, a breakdown of income and expenditures looks something like what appears below:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This individual types correspondence, handles trip arrangements, and takes care of office filing. The work-study student is not a debater and is not involved directly in debate research.

<sup>6</sup> This total figure does not include income and expenditures given to us by the University Administration if and when we qualify for the National Debate Tournament.

<i>Income</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Department .....	\$18,200	Instructional staff .....	\$16,800
		Secretarial staff .....	\$ 700
		Printing and supplies .....	\$ 700
University .....	\$ 7,500	Travel .....	\$ 7,500
Alumni .....	\$ 200	Scholarships and awards .....	\$ 200
Self-generated Funds .....	\$ 1,600	Travel .....	\$ 1,600
Student Government .....	\$ 600	On-campus activity .....	\$ 600
	<u>\$28,100</u>		<u>\$28,100</u>

### Conclusion

A departmental committee recently conducted a three-month review of our program. This review is normal procedure within the University every five years. They concluded: "We are convinced that participation in debate is a valid and valuable educational venture for undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts. It provides the only opportunity on the campus for a student to pursue excellence in his or her ability to handle ideas in public for the purpose of providing information or exerting influence. We believe that those students who debate acquire knowledge of argumentation theory, develop self-discipline, learn to apply effective methods of research, and develop their ability to analyze, organize, and support ideas." All of us involved in the current program are naturally delighted with this favorable review. If, as we believe, debate is a necessary and valuable part of a liberal education, then those concerned with the activity at the University of Massachusetts will continue to play some part in contributing to instruction in reason-giving by offering to our students an exciting and rewarding program. Should we succeed in our mission, we are convinced that training in reasoned persuasion will be important to our students as they come to grips with the social realities the future has in store for them and for all of us.

## PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE IS MORE SERIOUS THAN YOU THINK: FORENSICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DONALD J. BINGLE

The University of Chicago, one of the youngest of the major American universities, was founded in 1890. Launched with a program of ambitious dimensions and with a faculty of remarkable distinction under the intellectual leadership of William Rainey Harper, it was "a new kind of institution, borrowing from the structure and aims of German and English universities, joining the gentlemanly tradition of zeal for good works of the New England colleges with the confidence and brashness of the Middle West."<sup>1</sup> Harper instituted the four-quarter system, established the first university extension program, and announced that the University would be primarily devoted to graduate studies. The University of Chicago became at once one of the leading universities of the world. John D. Rockefeller, who provided the financial base for the University's creation, remarked of it, "It's the best investment I ever made."

The University still maintains the broad patterns set by Harper. Of the approximately 8,000 students currently enrolled, 5,500 are students in the graduate or professional schools; the remaining 2,500 are undergraduates. The emphasis on academic research is paramount; more than two-thirds of Chicago's Ph.D.'s go into college teaching, and over forty Nobel Prize winners have been associated with the University. In fact, the University has been accused of being too serious-minded. In the late '30s Chicago dropped out of the Big Ten and discontinued football altogether. Students and professors alike devoted themselves to the "life of the mind." This somber tone can be seen in the quadrangle's architecture, primarily grey gothic with looming gargoyles, and in the worn stone steps to the undergraduate library. Even the gymnasium has an intricately patterned stained-glass window in the lobby. With a preponderance of departmentalized and research-oriented graduate students and a distressing imbalance in the male:female ratio, campus social life has been rated from "poor" to "nonexistent." In fact, one campus group has tried to boost spirits by hawking t-shirts picturing a gargoyle doubled-up with laughter and the caption: "Ho, ho. The University of Chicago is funnier than you think."

While the Chicago Debating Society is part of the intellectual life and rational discourse of the University, it does not have the problem of being thought too serious-minded. In fact, Chicago's debate program has quite the opposite reputation on much of the midwestern debate circuit, for Chicago embraces—in fact, dominates—intercollegiate parliamentary debate. No doubt, many midwestern colleges regard parliamentary debate as not serious enough—something like a cross between a Johnny Carson mono-

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<sup>1</sup> *The University of Chicago Announcements*, 1977.

logue and a rowdy sideshow. Parliamentary debate and participation in the Chicago Debating Society are certainly not humorless, but on the other hand, they are more serious than many may think.

### Rules, Role-playing, and the Reasonable Man: The Parliamentary Perspective

Since the Chicago Debating Society engages in parliamentary debate and public forums to the virtual exclusion of all else, our program cannot be examined without an understanding of the substance and rationale of parliamentary debate. Parliamentary debate is a Canadian and English phenomenon which promotes debate of many varied topics in a parliamentary context. The parliamentary rules of the House of Commons apply, and role-playing is part of the exercise. There is no affirmative or negative team, but a Government (comprised of the Prime Minister and another minister appropriate to the topic) and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (comprised of the Leader of the Opposition and a "shadow" minister). Generally, the resolution to be debated is announced 15-30 minutes before the debate begins. The debate itself is run under the normal parliamentary rules by a Speaker of the House (usually the judge). A Member of the House (either a debater or an audience member) may rise to state a Point of Order (pointing out an infraction of the rules, e.g., exceeding the time limits set), a Point of Privilege (e.g., a request for apology if he or the Queen has been insulted, a request that a person speaking speak louder, etc.), or a Point of Information (a question addressed to the person speaking which he may accept or not at his choice). Heckling is not only permitted, but encouraged. The Government is given considerable latitude in interpreting the resolution. Some tournaments even allow the Government to set the date in time and space in any parliamentary context: the Chicago City Council, Roman Senate, College of Cardinals, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and so forth.

The advantages of parliamentary debate are numerous. It is at once more useful, more stimulating, more entertaining, more rational, and more rewarding than national-topic style. At the same time it is less time consuming and less petty. It can be thought of as a "gentleman's sport," a pleasurable form of intellectual exercise for the reasonable man or woman. Perhaps some particularized comparisons will help to convey this point.

First of all, the number and variety of topics in parliamentary debate provide considerable advantages over national-topic style. Varied topics make debate rounds more interesting and less repetitive. They allow the student to see different perspectives on a whole host of issues; economic, political, religious, and philosophical. The role-playing aspects in competitive rounds not only enforce this, but explode the stereotyped caricatures that exist in students' minds by making them explain and justify the views they set forth in the roles they have taken.<sup>2</sup> Instead of a specialized knowledge of a narrow field, a parliamentary debater must have a "working" knowledge of the general concepts in various fields of thought, and a knowledge of history and current events in order to apply these concepts and give adequate examples in support of his assertions. This varied back-

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that students participating in public debates hosted by the University of Chicago generally debate on the side consistent with their personal position on the resolution.

ground is the essence of liberal education. The fact that the topics are varied and are not announced long in advance also has the effect of shifting the emphasis of the debate from research to analysis. Thought predominates over sheer force of work. And again, it is much more important and intellectually stimulating for a university to teach its students to think, rather than to teach them how to research what other people have thought. Of course, *good* research needs analytical ability and builds upon the past. But too often, quality falls to the side in national-topic debate, and quantity takes over. File boxes and index cards become ends unto themselves. The argument, "I have six cards, he has four: I win by two," has no persuasive force of itself and would never be heard in parliamentary debate.

The collective voices of skeptical "national-topic" debate coaches might respond: "But wait a minute. Isn't parliamentary debate just a childish game of buffoonery where the logic of 'I have six jokes, he had four: I win by two' prevails?" The answer is simply "No." First, not all parliamentary rounds are meant to be humorous. In fact, the bulk of the debates involve serious discussions of philosophical issues even though the resolutions themselves are occasionally somewhat whimsical. If we merely told jokes, the University of Chicago could not have won one world championship<sup>3</sup> and three North American championships in parliamentary debate in the past five years and still have made respectable showings at national topic events such as the University of Illinois Forensic Progression. Instead, we stress analysis and speaking ability. As a bonus, those with a quick wit can have some fun in some of the debate rounds.

If Chicago has a reputation on the national-topic "debate circuit" for humor or rowdiness, it's partly because when parliamentary debaters talk to other people about debates they have been in, they tend to emphasize the humorous rounds. They do this for several simple reasons. First, it makes better small talk. Secondly, it's much easier to relate the outline of a funny case, or a couple of one-liners, or an effective heckle, than it is to explain the intricate subtleties of a serious debate and the intellectual satisfaction you got from participating in it. In 45 seconds a Chicago debater can outline the most outrageous debate he or she was ever in: the improbable setting, the amusing case, our amusing counterattack and our devastating punchline response that set the mood of the rest of the round. In 15 seconds he can relate the curious interpretation he once took of a resolution that literally made his opponent's mouth drop open. But he cannot in such time explain the intricacies of the best debate he was ever in—about the existence of an immutable spirit—or the final debate in London three years ago—which dealt with the issues of equality and self-determination—especially if he is asked what evidence he quoted. Thus, a reputation for humor develops. It is reinforced when we go to the University of Illinois because of the good-natured rivalry which exists between our schools, and because at parliamentary events attended by large numbers of non-parliamentary schools, we are willing to take the lead in heckling, realizing that others may not be experienced enough to have the necessary self-confidence or timing. We are proud of the lead we take in these matters, especially at events like the 1977 forensic progression at the University of Illinois, where some national-topic debaters refused to debate in the experimental parliamentary round because the competitive impetus of judging was not present.

<sup>3</sup> The Trans-Atlantic Universities Speech Association (TAUSA) English-Speaking World Championships. This tournament is discussed later in the essay.

The overbearing pettiness of competitiveness can be lessened. Certainly we try hard to do well at every tournament we attend, but when one can have a good time debating, winning isn't the only reason to go.

It should be noted that heckling need not always be humorous, though it often is. Heckling, like cross-examination, allows one to devastate his opponent on his opponent's own time. A four word heckle, when issued at the proper moment, can devastate an opponent's case by pointing out a glaring counter example or flaw, by logical *reductio ad absurdum*, and so forth. Attacking an opponent's character or motives through heckling may deflate his role or demeanor. A pun or witticism may distract an opponent's train of thought or speaking fluency. Heckling and responding to heckles—in fact, parliamentary debate in general—teaches one to think on his feet, to use language precisely, and to speak with self-assurance. It conforms more to reality than does the sterile atmosphere of cross-examination questions to a recalcitrant opponent in a nearly deserted college classroom. It emphasizes the persuasive aspects of public speaking, by pointing out that audience impact is central; and this is essential to remember in the real world. It might even mundanely be pointed out that parliamentary debate is more practical. It at least teaches one the elements of public speaking necessary for politics, after-dinner events, and business affairs. The peculiar speaking style and terms of art used by national-topic debaters perhaps would train one to be a legislative assistant; however, the bureaucracy is already too large.

Finally, the lack of research in parliamentary debate means that a student's time can be devoted to his studies, yet he can still participate in debate. This means students from many varied disciplines often do join the Chicago Debating Society. This diversity greatly adds to the quality of discussions. On the parliamentary circuit, graduate students remain eligible to compete; they often continue to compete because parliamentary debate is enjoyable. That may be its most important advantage of all.

### The Program to Meet the Perspective

The Chicago Debating Society has a membership of 40 to 50 students, approximately three-fourths of whom are undergraduates. Approximately thirty students are regularly active throughout the year in our various programs. These programs include:

(1) Debate instruction and practice: Weekly instruction and practice sessions are conducted by the debate coach in various aspects of parliamentary debate and certain individual events (extemporaneous speaking, impromptu speaking, etc.). In addition, the coach runs an on-going intramural tournament structured somewhat like a "challenge" system of competition. Separate run-off tournaments are held by the Society to determine who will be sent to each intercollegiate tournament.

(2) Attending parliamentary tournaments: Generally the Society sends two debate teams<sup>4</sup> to the North American championships at McGill University in Montreal and two teams to the Trans-Atlantic Universities Speech Association (TAUSA) English-Speaking World Championships (the location rotates among the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada). We also attend tournaments at Princeton University, Swarthmore College, Dickinson College, and the University of Toronto. Due to financial constraints, we usually must forego parliamentary debate tournaments at Co-

<sup>4</sup> These are debate teams of two persons each.

lumbia University, Brown University, and at two Canadian military academies (the Royal Military College and the Collège Militaire Royale).

(3) Attending other tournaments: We attend miscellaneous local forensic events such as the University of Illinois' Forensic Progression and its Courtroom Debate Conference (mock trial), legislative assemblies, and Protogoras events (extemporaneous debating).

(4) Hosting tournaments: We annually host a parliamentary tournament in the spring which includes six preliminary rounds, a final round, and a humorous public debate.<sup>5</sup> We also host a high school tournament of some type in the fall for local schools. Although we have lost money on both events in the past, we were able to cover our expenses during the last year (1976-1977).

(5) Hosting public forums: The Chicago Political Union, a creature of The Chicago Debating Society, hosts four to seven public debates each year on such topics as abortion, farm subsidies, capital punishment, and Zionism. No admission is charged, so the cost of these debates must be subsidized by the debate society.

The Society receives funds from a number of sources: (1) The Dean of Students provides a \$1000 grant. (2) Student Government allocates \$400-\$500 (in a good year). (3) Money-raising activities may net \$600-\$800. The Society participates in public debates before community groups or alumni as part of fund-raising activities. We also sponsor non-debate related movies on campus to raise money. (4) In addition, separate financing for attending TAUSA has been arranged in two of the past three years. Including this, and any other miscellaneous gifts, the budget usually hovers around \$3000 per academic year. Around \$2400 goes for transportation and fees for parliamentary tournaments, \$150 for other tournaments, \$250 for The Chicago Political Union, and \$200 for administrative expenses, with the hosted tournaments hopefully breaking even or generating a small profit. The Society shares office space with the Women's Union in a campus building. In addition, the Dean of Students appoints a graduate student to act as debate coach each year. The University has no formal debate program nor a Department of Speech. Because most of the parliamentary debates are held at locations some distance from Chicago, travel expenses consume the greater part of the budget. Since Chicago entered the parliamentary circuit in 1970, the annual grant from the Dean of Students has been essential to our participation because under Student Government regulations funds from Student Government may not be used for travel. Increasing budgetary and administrative pressure may force the Dean to curtail his generous support in the next few years. If this occurs and no new sources are found, substantial program cutbacks can be expected. Already, students bear a substantial amount of the costs of attending most tournaments themselves. This tends to exclude financially poorer students from attending certain tournaments and greatly aggravates the debate society's decisions on budget allocations.

### **Bossism and Democratic Politics in the Big City**

The Chicago Debating Society operates as an independent student organization much as did the literary societies that dominated university life in

<sup>5</sup> For information on this tournament, write to the Chicago Debating Society, Ida Noyes Hall, University of Chicago, 1212 East 59th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

the United States in the late nineteenth century. Half a dozen years ago the Society was operated like a feudal monarchy, with only an elite clique of students participating. Since then, efforts to expand and democratize the Society have taken firm root. Political turmoil and instability, however, are present under this democratic rule. As was noted, financial constraints provide the setting for political disputes, as the Society democratically controls most expenditures. Moreover, the debate coach is not in a good position to minimize the factionalism which results from the greatly decentralized decision-making. The debate coach is not a faculty advisor, but a graduate student appointed yearly upon the Society's recommendation. He is basically a teacher. He does not even directly determine who attends tournaments, as separate run-off competitions are held. At business meetings, skillful debaters often turn to demagoguery during the clashes between political factions. Too often the result is conflict or attempted impeachments of officers of the Society. Impeachments are aggravated by a cumbersome constitution and overly broad membership provisions which allow inactive debaters to decide crucial issues. To alleviate this problem, either a full-time coach must be appointed with broad powers or the constitution must be changed to allow more fair and expeditious processes for political change-overs. For as it is, these disputes take time away from instruction, practice, and competition. The Society has recently been making efforts to do just this. A consensus government has been established, table-pounding reduced, and business meetings shortened. Better that parliamentary politics be de-emphasized in favor of parliamentary debate, something more worthwhile and certainly more enjoyable.

These administrative difficulties, however, have not dampened the enthusiasm of Chicago debaters. Society debaters work continually on new ways to engage in parliamentary debate, while at the same time serving the University community. For instance, public forums have been held regarding such topics as the University's grading policies and affirmative action. In addition, the Debating Society has been negotiating with the campus radio station regarding weekly radio debates. Individual members of the Society have recently undertaken to tutor local high school students in public speaking. Such programs are an especially beneficial form of public service, as Chicago Public Schools would otherwise be unable to provide such "supplementary" instruction to students due to budgetary constraints.

Increasing numbers of Chicago students are becoming involved in parliamentary debate. The students attracted to the University of Chicago seem to do well naturally in parliamentary debate, but rather than rely merely upon their natural speaking ability, Society members have shown increasing willingness to receive instruction and to practice their craft extensively. The benefits they receive from parliamentary debate serve them well in whatever direction they pursue in the real world. Chicago debaters not only become lawyers and politicians, but have also become doctors, researchers, and economists. There is something to be said for a program, which like a liberal education, can be both beneficial and enjoyable, no matter what career one pursues.



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