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speaker and gavel

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Speaker and Gavel

Volume 16

Summer 1979

No. 4

IN MEMORIAM: MELVIN P. MOORHOUSE 1912-1979

One of Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha's most active and dedicated members, Melvin P. (Mel) Moorhouse, passed away on May 28, 1979. Upon his arrival at Wichita State University in 1957 as Director of Forensics, Mel became Delta Sigma Rho chapter sponsor and served as a Vice-President of DSR from 1961 until the merger with Tau Kappa Alpha. He continued to serve as DSR-TKA sponsor until his retirement from teaching in December 1978.

For fifteen years, Mel was a member of the Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha National Council, serving as Governor of Region VII through 1978. After so many years of service to our organization, it was indeed fitting that the DSR-TKA Distinguished Service Award was presented to Mel Moorhouse at the National Conference held in 1975 at the University of Kentucky.

Mel received his B.A. degree from Westminster College (Pa.) in 1935 and his M.A. from Ohio State in 1956. He had taught previously at Knoxville College and at Westminster before his 21 years of service at Wichita State, including 17 years as Director of Forensics, during which time his students won innumerable awards and honors including First Place in the National Debate Tournament in 1968.

One of the organizations to which Mel was most dedicated was the Missouri Valley Forensic League which he served as Executive Secretary for ten years until 1977 at which time he donated the Mel Moorhouse Traveling Plaque for the winner of the annual MVFL Oratory Contest. Mel was a charter member of the American Forensic Association, the President of the Kansas Speech Communication Association in 1975-76, and a past president of the Kansas Intercollegiate Debate League.

Although Mel retired from active forensics coaching in 1974, he continued to attend and judge at high school and college debate and forensics events including DSR-TKA National Conferences. In 1974 the former Shocker Tournament at Wichita State University was renamed the Mel Moorhouse Invitational Forensics in his honor.

Those of us fortunate enough to have known Mel are tremendously saddened by the loss of a valued colleague and staunch friend. He was a genuinely kind and compassionate person, devoted to his family, dedicated to his students and involved in the concerns of humanity. To all of us, whether we knew him personally or not, Mel leaves the legacy of a lifetime committed to the support and development of debate and forensic activities.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

JACK H. HOWE

As the new president of Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha, my first words to you would be remiss if they were not to thank you sincerely for the unexpected honor this organization has conferred on me. Your faith in my ability to serve as president of this fraternity is greatly appreciated.

It would be equally remiss of me, however, if I were to fill this page with platitudes and lull us into a sense of complacency regarding the future of DSR-TKA. All too often in the past, DSR-TKA has been pleased to accept a complacent view of the fraternity and its future. But do we really have that much to be complacent about?

Let us face squarely some uncomfortable facts. First, our number of initiates has been declining for the past couple of years. An alarming number of our chapters have failed to initiate anyone for several years with the result that by now their "chapters" must consist solely of the sponsor and another faculty member or so. Perhaps even more alarming is the fact that some of these "ghost chapters" exist not only in schools that have ceased to maintain forensic programs, but also in institutions that are among the most forensically prominent in the country. In these latter instances, no lack of potentially qualified members can be cited as an excuse for failure to initiate; rather, it would appear the blame must fall solely on a disinterested local sponsor. Second, the regional organizations that stand between the local chapters and the national offices can scarcely be called flourishing. One region is frankly moribund and several are in serious arrears in the matter of conducting elections for regional officers. It should be one of the duties of governors to maintain contact with the chapters in their regions, but one suspects that few governors are trying to do this. Third, on the national level, the Secretary's office sometimes does not know who is the sponsor of a local chapter, and one looks in vain for activity on the part of the Student Officers of DSR-TKA.

Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha can become, once again, the active force for promoting both forensics and speech education in general that it was intended to be. But if these goals are to be realized, there must be a revitalization on all levels in this organization. Chapter sponsors must become far more active in initiating members into the fraternity. The regions must undertake a more active role than they have currently been assuming. Not just a few, but *all* regions should sponsor regional tournaments at some time during the year. Governors should play a more active role in promoting DSR-TKA in their regions. The national officers urge any member to forward suggestions to them as to ways in which they can better serve the membership.

We approach a new decade, and it may be a critical one for DSR-TKA. We can no longer delay undertaking positive measures if our fraternity is to be a meaningful one.

THE COUNTERPLAN AS DISADVANTAGE

ROBERT J. BRANHAM

The counterplan has emerged in the past decade as a prominent, if not predominant, refutative strategy for negative debaters. Its frequency of employment has increased dramatically, and its acceptability as a strategy is now largely unquestioned.¹ Strangely, this remarkable ascendance has prompted little theoretical literature.² It has prompted numerous theoretical conflicts in practice which remain unaddressed and unresolved.

The most numerous and serious conflicts appear to cluster around the issue of counterplan competitiveness. Competitiveness is the essential factor in the determination of logical weight and standing for the counterplan. It describes the relationship between counterplan and plan and explains why acceptance of the counterplan should warrant rejection of the plan and resolution. For all its importance, competitiveness is generally debated and determined by reference to conventional rules for which the logical bases have been forgotten or unexplained.

When academic debating was less a matter of policy evaluation than the display and criticism of individual advocacy and refutation skills, competitiveness seems to have emerged as a fairness rule.³ The function of competitiveness was to provide a degree of argumentative relevance—"clash" between affirmative and negative speakers. In pedagogy and in practice, this fairness rule was eventually expressed as a simple dictum: the counterplan must better meet the affirmative needs. The advocates of a counterplan were held to concede the affirmative's justification for action, while providing a non-resolutional alternative for the attainment of these shared objectives.

With growing acceptance of the "policy systems" and "hypothesis testing" paradigms for evaluation of debates, competitiveness rules changed. The affirmative is now viewed generally as advocating a proposition of policy whose advantages must be calculated through reference to some (or all) non-resolutional alternatives. Lichtman and Rohrer's recent overview of systems theory identifies two independent criteria which may be satisfied in the demonstration of counterplan competitiveness: Mutual exclusivity between plan and counterplan; and the comparative desirability of adopting the counterplan alone rather than in combination with the affirmative plan. Both standards insist that the negative provide reasons why acceptance of both counterplan and plan is impossible or undesirable. This new set of rules shifts the focus of the traditional competitiveness standard. Demonstration that the counterplan meets the affirmative's problems is believed to be insufficient, requiring the additional determination that acceptance of such policy redundancy is impossible or undesirable. The negative, beyond simple presentation of the counterplan, must sup-

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¹ David Thomas, ed., *National Debate Tournament Booklet of Judges* (private circulation, Lexington, Kentucky, 1979).

² The most comprehensive overview of modern counterplan theory is provided by Allan Lichtman and Daniel Rohrer, "A General Theory of the Counterplan," *Advanced Debate*, ed. David Thomas (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1974).

³ Thomas J. Hynes, "A History of the Counterplan," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974).

discussion of the likelihood of such possible responses being implemented and the degree to which the plan adoption might influence this probability.

The affirmative faced with a counterplan might choose a similar course of response. If the counterplan is viewed as a disadvantage, the affirmative might seek to test its relevance by proposing a "counter-counterplan." An affirmative team might present and defend a third policy option in the debate which is non-competitive with the original plan and which obtains the "unique" counterplan advantages. This third policy need not be resolutational; it need only be demonstrably compatible with the plan. Like the affirmative response to the conventional disadvantage outlined above, the counter-counterplan would not enjoy implementational fiat, but would instead be weighed as a probable response of a system operating after the adoption of the original plan.

3. Fiat Implications

The weight accorded a disadvantage in a decision is generally thought to be a product of three factors: significance of costs; probability of occurrence; and uniqueness to the plan. If the counterplan operates as a disadvantage, its ability to demonstrate probability and uniqueness requires more than simple competition. The counterplan advocates must offer some assurance that the proposal precluded by plan adoption bears some likelihood of adoption without the plan. A legislative committee considering legislation to adopt a plan for televised safety promotions would presumably abandon this proposal if informed that television would soon be outlawed. Their willingness to do so, however, depends heavily upon their conclusion that the ban is probable. Without this assurance, they might well decide to shoulder the risk of future obsolescence.

The extent to which the disadvantage of precluded counterplan adoption is *unique* to the affirmative plan depends upon two factors: (1) The likelihood of counterplan adoption without the plan; and (2) The degree to which plan adoption reduces this likelihood. Without substantiation of these two conditions, the risk that plan implementation will preclude adoption of a more desirable policy alternative can hardly be judged significant. Even if our imaginary legislative committee felt that a television ban was likely in the near future and would render their proposed safety campaign irrelevant, they might be willing to press ahead for passage given any doubts about the passage of the ban, probability of a time lag between campaign institution and ban implementation, or the belief that initiation of the televised campaign would not seriously impair the chances for adoption of the more desirable ban.

Such a stipulation strikes at the heart of modern counterplan debate. Of all the issues in counterplan theory, perhaps the *least* controversial might be the ability of the negative to fiat its proposal. Lichtman and Rohrer summarize this consensus as follows:

Similarly, if the negative team chooses not to defend the existing order, but to propose additional competitors to the affirmative plan . . . it need not assume responsibility for demonstrating the political viability of these alternatives. As a reasonable means of opposing adoption of the resolution, the negative could claim that we "should" take another course of action instead.⁴

⁴ Allan J. Lichtman and Daniel Rohrer, "Policy Systems Debate: A Reaffirmation" (paper delivered to the Speech Communication Association, San Antonio, Texas, November, 1979), p. 15.

Why is the negative given fiat power? Perhaps because, like Lichtman and Rohrer, theorists have recognized the special properties and requirements of the "should" proposition defended by the affirmative and sought to apply the concept to the negative. The affirmative logically need not demonstrate the political viability of the plan to hold that it *should* be adopted. Despite the now common portrait of the negative team as advocates of competing policy alternatives, we are left with only one essential proposition in the round: the affirmative's claim that the resolution (as embodied in the plan) should be adopted. Defense by the negative of an alternative "should" proposition is not, by itself, enough to demonstrate that we should not also adopt the plan. Nor does competitiveness by itself make the negative's "should" proposition a denial of the affirmative's.

It is possible for us to conclude that both the televised safety campaign and the television ban should be adopted. The fact that we cannot do both does not change this judgment of mutual desirability. Defense of the proposition that we should *not* adopt the plan because of a counterplan requires some assurance that through plan implementation we significantly reduce the chances of adopting the more desirable counterplan. Further, in order for this risk to bear much weight, we must be convinced that some significant chance exists without the plan for counterplan adoption. Only in this way does the fact that we "should" adopt a counterplan imply that we should not adopt the plan. Adopting a plan entails the risk that another policy might not be instituted as a result. The counterplan is a means by which this risk may be formally assessed, but contributes by its text only an idea of what might be missed. The assessment of the degree of risk involved requires a demonstration of the increased probability that this alternative will be ignored or avoided.

By this view, the negative always defends the present system—whether for its own merits or for its comparative likelihood of implementing the counterplan. Two additional lines of affirmative defense are thus added by the reconceptualization of counterplan as disadvantage: (1) The demonstration that likelihood of counterplan passage is insignificant even without the plan (the counterplan/disadvantage is non-unique); and (2) The conceivable demonstration that plan adoption may *improve* the chances for counterplan adoption over those now faced in the present system.

Conclusion

If accepted, the view of the counterplan as disadvantage would prompt major alterations in the practice and evaluation of counterplan advocacy. It is safe to assume that the meteoric rise in popularity of the counterplan is largely attributable to the negative's ability in pursuing such a strategy to avoid facing the issues of political viability which have so diminished the appearance of the "minor repair."

While not a death knell for counterplans, the view of counterplan as disadvantage would impose far greater burdens upon counterplan advocates than in the past and might (as in the case of the television ban example) render certain counterproposals practically indefensible. Such a view should be neither lightly accepted nor lightly dismissed.

The purpose of this discussion has been to point out a discrepancy between the logical weight assigned to counterplans in the decision process and the burdens conventionally required of counterplan advocates for this weight to be imposed. We might choose to ignore this discrepancy, even if we accept its existence, in the name of "fairness"—a misnomer, generally applied to our intuition that affirmative and negative burdens are rea-

leviate a social problem.⁴ The distinct possibility exists that resolitional alternatives would be enacted.

Unger argued that the debate critic should jettison topical solutions in the same fashion that the critic might jettison nontopical plan provisions or topical minor repairs: “Two helpful analogies spring to mind (A) Negative repairs which are argued by the affirmative to be topical and (B) Affirmative plan provisions which are alleged to be extra, or non, or anti, or contra—or whatever prefix may be in vogue—topical. In each instance the offending policy stance is most generally held to be removed from the debate”⁵

To simply disallow implementation of topical alternatives is not a reasonable standard of nontopicality to impose upon the studies counterplan because it is contradictory to the philosophy of the studies counterplan. The negative position in the debate is not to adopt any nontopical alternatives that are worthwhile but to implement the optimal solution to the problem at the conclusion of the studies mandated by the negative. The best nontopical solution may well not be the optimal solution.

The importance of the shift from optimal solution to best nontopical solution by the negative if the studies favor a topical solution is heightened by the fact that nontopical solutions to a problem might well not exist. Assuming that affirmative case areas have been topical, it may be difficult to discover nontopical solutions to certain affirmative problem areas. For example, the most popular affirmative case on the consumer product safety topic was probably the installation of airbags in automobiles. The most likely alternative to airbags was the increased use of seatbelts, which was also a popular affirmative case. A similar example on the felony crime topic was the case on felony spouse abuse. Topicality on this case usually depended upon the affirmative winning that freeing the police and court time made spouse abuse a topical case. Using that standard of topicality, any solution to felony spouse abuse would be topical because the police and courts would have more time to investigate and prosecute other felony crimes.⁶

If topical policies were to be removed from the debate, then the negative should be expected to do two things. First, the negative should be able to enumerate a number of possible solutions that are nontopical. Second, the negative should be expected to indicate that one of these nontopical solutions would be likely to be determined the optimal solution.

Unger’s second nontopicality defense of the studies counterplan was that a results standard for topicality was unreasonable: “What the negative has undertaken to perform is to alter the nature of the inputs into the decision making process. Once an alteration has been made, the process continues to operate as a natural ongoing functioning mechanism of the present system For example, if in future years the electoral process produces a more liberal Congress and Executive Branch which operates

⁴ Unger, p. 3.

⁵ Unger, p. 14.

⁶ This argument should not be construed in such a manner as to indicate that all counterplans are topical. Some approaches, such as changing the agent in the topic, would necessarily be nontopical. These examples are meant only to indicate that certain topics are interpreted so liberally by debaters and critics that all reasonable solutions to the affirmative problem area would be topical. In these circumstances, it would seem that the negative must win topicality in order to carry the counterplan. If that is true, then the studies counterplan would seem fruitless.

to expand employment opportunities, it would be difficult for an affirmative to argue that such a manifestation of the natural workings of the electoral system was topical and, hence, unacceptable ground for the negative, even though it was certain or likely to take place.”⁷

This argument is nothing more than a dynamic status quo argument, that is, Congress could adopt the proposal if it wished to and it may adopt it at some point in the future. This argument has traditionally been considered to be an inherency argument rather than a nontopicality argument. Furthermore, it is generally considered an invalid argument because Congress could adopt anything it pleases to adopt. However, that does not mean that there is a high probability that it will adopt a particular policy. Acceptance of this particular argument would mean that no affirmative case could be voted for because Congress could adopt it at some time in the future.

Unger erroneously drew a distinction between artificially altering policies through the use of affirmative fiat and action that alters the inputs into a decision making process such that the system itself naturally produces topical results.⁸ If the key to the distinction is that the studies counterplan avoids artificial alteration of the decision making process which burdens the affirmative plan, there is no real distinction between the studies counterplan and the affirmative plan. There is no distinction because the studies counterplan is also an artificial alteration of the status quo because the studies counterplan fiats into existence the agency that conducts the studies and, at a minimum, disseminates that information much more efficiently than the status quo. The status quo would not, presumably, conduct the studies mandated by the counterplan because the counterplan would be unnecessary if the status quo were adequately studying the problem. If a structural change is a qualitative change in the nature of the present system, as Wood suggested, then the studies counterplan could be considered to be topical if it suggested a topical solution.⁹ If one were to consider the entire decision making process, then the argument that the studies counterplan is not topical because it does not change the decision making process is false because the studies counterplan does alter the decision making process by providing a structure to gather information that the present system would not be inclined to gather.

Additionally, the wording of the resolution may also make the studies counterplan a topical approach. The 1978–79 intercollegiate debate resolution, which called for the federal government to implement a program to guarantee employment opportunities for all United States citizens in the labor force, is an excellent example of a resolution which restricted the use of the studies counterplan. Loosely defined, a program is a “plan of action.”¹⁰ When the negative begins to study the employment situation, in this circumstance, it is implementing a plan of action which addresses itself to the need area assigned to the affirmative. This is especially true when the negative argues that studies are a necessary step in the selection

⁷ Unger, p. 15.

⁸ Unger, p. 16.

⁹ Roy V. Wood, *Strategic Debate* (Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1972), p. 78. Wood used this argument on inherency rather than topicality, but, given the nature of this particular topicality argument, it would appear to be applicable.

¹⁰ *Webster's New American Dictionary* (New York: Books, Inc., 1971), p. 781.

teams argue about what policies should be adopted not whether or not the plan would be adopted or stay in effect.

Finally, recent affirmative plans may well negate the possibility of coexistence of the plan and the studies counterplan. Since many plans now call for research, development and implementation of any, topical “cost effective” solutions to the problem, the affirmative and the studies counterplan would both seem to provide for the adoption of the same programs. While the two could both require or imply adoption of the same mechanism and coexist, there does not seem to be any good reason to have two plans that do the same thing.

The studies counterplan is not competitive in the traditional “equal results” standard or the more contemporary standard of coexistence. The studies counterplan fails to meet the equal results standard because the time lag denies absolute equality of results and because there is no guarantee that the optimal or even the best policy will be adopted after study. The studies counterplan fails to meet the coexistence standard of competitiveness because the affirmative action should not limit future research and action.

Summary

The two most commonly applied requirements of any counterplan are nontopicality and competitiveness. The studies counterplan fails to meet either of these two theoretical burdens.

A THEORY OF THE "TURNAROUND"

WALTER ULRICH

One of the recent trends in academic debate has been the increased use by affirmative teams of the "turnaround." Essentially, this strategy involves an affirmative team arguing that, not only will its plan not create a disadvantage but that its plan will prevent a disadvantage from occurring. The affirmative thus converts a negative disadvantage into an independent reason to vote for the affirmative plan. This strategy is very useful to an advocate, since it shifts the team from a defensive stance to an offensive position, and thus benefits the team logically and psychologically. While in many ways this argument is not new (it is a modification of the "turning the tables" argument), the increased emphasis on turnarounds has come at a time when the theory behind the practice has not been discussed seriously, either in debate literature or, surprisingly, in most debate rounds. As a consequence, many debaters, when confronted with a turnaround, do not consider its theoretical requirements and instead make arguments in a vacuum. This essay will attempt to explain some of the causes of the increased use of turnarounds, suggest some standards for evaluating turnarounds, and provide guidelines for debating turnarounds.

Increased use of turnarounds has resulted from two characteristics of contemporary debate. The first is the increased use of risk analysis by debaters. Several popular disadvantages argued by negative teams initially claim a very large impact. When the links to the disadvantage are challenged, negatives often argue that, even if there is no certainty of a disadvantage, since the impact of the disadvantage is so great, any risk of the plan producing the disadvantage is enough to vote against the case. Since the weight given a disadvantage is calculated by multiplying the harm by the probability of its occurrence, a very improbable disadvantage which has a great impact could outweigh many advantages. It is hard to reduce the risk of any disadvantage to zero, but since the initial link between the plan and the disadvantage is often tenuous, the affirmative has another option open to them. The strongest affirmative tactic is to use risk analysis to their advantage by "turning" the disadvantage and arguing there is as much risk that the plan will be beneficial as that it will be harmful. The affirmative thus might argue that while there is a risk that the plan might melt the polar icecaps, there is also the risk that the plan, by increasing the world temperature, could save the world from an ice age. By turning around the disadvantage, the affirmative avoids the task of reducing the risk of a disadvantage to zero. The negative risk is balanced by the affirmative team's risk, so a judge is likely to view any net risk as insignificant, since its direction is unknown.

Turnarounds have also been used to protect an affirmative against a negative team that argues a large number of poorly developed plan attacks. Negative teams often present many plan attacks and disadvantages in a round, planning to drop the weaker ones in rebuttals. When a disadvantage is "turned," however, the negative team is prevented from dropping that disadvantage without giving the affirmative an advantage. Thus the negative team hurts itself by presenting a large number of superficial disad-

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be claimed in both affirmative rebuttals, and the initial explanation should be adequate enough for the negative to be able to respond to the argument in a critical manner. Failure to do this will undermine the viability of the critical evaluation of policies, since the turnaround would not become clear until it is impossible for it to be critically evaluated by the negative team.

In addition to these theoretical arguments, there are some practical strategies a team should use in debating a turnaround. First, it is vital that turnarounds should not be dropped. Even if a team does not plan to win a specific disadvantage, they should explain why it is not "turned" before they respond to other arguments; otherwise the affirmative team would win an advantage by default. Second, teams need to be alert for affirmative mistakes. Some affirmative teams will argue contradictory turnarounds by attempting to "turn" both the link to the disadvantage and the impact of the disadvantage. A team may argue both that food aid is bad and that its plan increases food aid. A wise second negative would concede both "turns," but argue that, if both turnarounds are true, then the plan, by increasing bad food aid, is undesirable. Some may argue that this is not a legitimate strategy, since the second negative rebuttal position contradicts the second negative constructive position, but since the affirmative team members also contradict themselves, and the affirmative positions are better defended than the initial negative position, a wise policy matter would be to act in the appropriate manner suggested by the best (i.e., affirmative) evidence. In any argument which attempts to discover the truth, it is sometimes required that an advocate admit that he/she was wrong, and then to examine the impact of his/her new view of reality. In this case, the second negative rebuttalist would admit to being in error, but would note that the new information calls for a rejection of the plan.

Third, often turnarounds do not deny the initial link to a disadvantage. Often policies have multiple effects. It may be that a plan will both save money and cost some money at the same time, or that an economic program will have both good and bad consequences. In "turning" a disadvantage, however, affirmative teams often do not dispute the initial negative link to the disadvantage. Thus the question becomes whether the affirmative link (or harm) evidence is better than the negative evidence. The turnaround thus develops into a debate within a debate: the second negative should argue that the initial link to the disadvantage is stronger than the link to the turnaround, or that the bad effects of the disadvantage outweigh the good effects, while the affirmative should argue the opposite is true. The initial links and evidence should be weighed against the affirmative evidence.

It may also be wise in some cases to present disadvantages in the first negative speech to give the negative more time to respond to the turnarounds, a strategy gaining wider and wider acceptance. Finally, the best way to prevent losing a debate because of a turnaround is to argue disadvantages that are unlikely to be turned around. Be sure you know your disadvantages well and that you have anticipated all possible turnarounds.

It is likely that turnarounds will remain an issue in the debate community for a long time. The amount of success that affirmative teams have had with turnarounds has even caused many negative teams to debate advantages as if they were disadvantages and to try to "turn around" advantages. This increased use of turnarounds should not continue without an understanding of the requirements of turnarounds. Hopefully the guidelines suggested in this essay will act as a springboard for further examinations of the turnaround.

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