

The Final Round¹

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This House supports institutional neutrality.

A Note about the Notes

These are my notes from the varsity final round at Bethel on March 29, 2025. They are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. They are not verbatim transcripts but rather summarize what was said as I understood it. I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what the debater said or thinks they said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow, structured to follow arguments from one speech to the next. It looks like my written notes from the debate, cleaned up and formatted.

The Final Round

The final round at Bethel was between the Bethel team of Willa Zalaznick and Jack Woleck on the Government and New Canaan team of Mason Wheeler and Sophia La Magna on the Opposition. The debate was won by the Government team from Bethel.

1) Prime Minister Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the motion
- c) Definition: “institutional neutrality” (“IN”²) as neutrality by an institution on public issues
 - i) “support” means enforce
- d) Observation: this policy does not apply to individuals or students
- e) G1³: IN protects school resources
 - i) Goal of universities is education
 - (1) Actions cost Columbia \$400 million
 - ii) Risk as USFG policy could change every 4-8 years
 - (1) Political neutrality the only solution
 - iii) e.g., I plan to go to Purdue for aeronautics
 - (1) program depends on government funding
 - (2) IN protects students
- f) G2: IN promotes student engagement
 - i) Discourse requires building open culture

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² Defines “IN” as an abbreviation for “Institutional Neutrality.”

³ “G1” indicates the Government first contention, “O2” the Opposition second contention and so forth.

- (1) E.g., CDA has no stance
- (2) This promotes open discourse
- ii) Policy position can still exist in other organizations
 - (1) E.g., clubs, student organizations, etc.
- POI: isn't IN a political stance?***
 - (2) See G3, not if all schools adopt the policy
 - iii) Goal is a diverse student body
 - (1) IN encourages applications
 - (2) E.g., Princeton 80% liberal according to Harris poll
 - g) G3: IN becomes a political stance if not enforced
 - i) E.g., chaos at Columbia
 - ii) If required, all colleges would be neutral, not political
 - iii) Now some schools seen as against some students
 - h) Summary: IN good for education, safety, discourse
- 2) Leader of the Opposition Constructive**
 - a) Intro/motion
 - b) O1: Institution/leaders use power for humanitarian core values
 - i) E.g., world peace, equality
 - ii) Students want to know where college stands before applying
 - (1) Prefer honesty to IN
 - (2) Attend schools with similar beliefs
 - iii) At Yale, faculty and students often opposition administration
 - (1) Did not end in strife
 - (2) E.g., Yale, police brutality, Floyd
 - iv) Under IN, students wouldn't know
 - c) O2: IN impossible given power and investments
 - i) Ways to be aware of positions
 - (1) Universities fund various local and global initiatives
 - (2) Not neutral even without making a statement
 - ii) If universities don't shape policy, politicians will
 - (1) E.g., suffrage, violence, student rights on campus
 - d) O3: Institutions have freedom of speech
 - i) This is clearly evident from the past
 - ii) Family business, big business, all stand up for what matters to them
 - iii) IN stifles university freedom of speech
 - e) G1: Columbia an extreme example
 - i) Unique across US and in history, not repeated
 - f) G2: Clear policy helps students and locals
 - i) Is the university a benefit or not
 - ii) University positions need not be extreme
 - (1) Likely centrist
 - (2) Need not speak on every issue
- 3) Member of Government Constructive**
 - a) Intro/motion
 - b) O1: Power?
 - i) May be used to suppress students if positions not aligned

- ii) Internal discourse increases with IN
- iii) Avoids an “echo chamber” environment
- c) O2: Right to know?
 - i) All IN, then no stance
 - (1) Allows open discourse and debate
 - ii) IN not anti-demonstration or anti-protest
 - (1) Allows all sides to be heard
 - (2) Lets students feel safe
- d) O3: IN is not a political stance
 - i) IN allows for more change
 - ii) Hear multiple sides
- e) G1: Columbia?
 - i) It’s a new world with a new normal
 - (1) Gov’t using new tactics
 - (2) IN protects the institution
 - ii) Need to close the divide, colleges should stay neutral
 - iii) Resource loss
 - (1) Colleges shouldn’t pander
 - (2) Students shouldn’t have to conform
 - (3) Education should not be political
- f) G2: No IN, alienate students
 - i) Better discourse, learning
 - ii) Truth is subjective
 - (1) University position will alienate some
- g) G3: Columbia is an important example
 - i) Protests placed institution in jeopardy
 - ii) Neutral stance hurt
 - iii) If all colleges neutral, seen a proper response
- 4) Member of the Opposition Constructive**
 - a) Intro/motion
 - b) Flaw: Gov has no plan to enforce IN
 - i) Each university decides for itself
 - ii) Therefore, G3 fails
 - iii) Opp doesn’t require every university take a position on everything
 - (1) Only on what matters to them
 - c) G2: Students more engaged if school stands for values
 - i) Choose culture that suits them
 - ii) Donors want funds to go to the right causes
 - (1) Alienated if school has no stance out of fear
 - (2) Remember G3 fails!
 - d) G1: precedent on taking position on rights
 - i) Schools created change
 - ii) No problem with this until now
 - iii) Huge endowments at risk
 - (1) No donations if they don’t agree with policies
 - e) O1: student freedom of speech

- i) E.g., Yale/Harvard had position on admissions
 - (1) Students and faculty opposed it
 - ii) Motion not about cracking down on dissent
 - (1) If institution wrong, students/faculty protest
 - (2) This is freedom of speech
- POI: Why should they protest against university?**
- (3) Voice as university
- f) O2: colleges have diverse identities
 - i) No stance, leave policy to corporations/politicians
 - ii) Can't be neutral with investments
 - iii) Anti-democratic?
 - (1) Universities helped force democratic change
 - (2) E.g., divestment
 - g) O3: IN not possible
 - i) Would reduce diversity
- 5) Leader of Opposition Rebuttal**
- a) Intro
 - b) G1: Resources?
 - i) Statement could just be an Instagram post
 - c) Safety? Yale?
 - i) Students and professors debate against university
 - ii) On Opp, universities can't take a stance
 - d) Freedom of Speech?
 - i) Universities have highly educated members
 - ii) Why would they change their position with each new administration
 - iii) On Opp will push for what's right
 - iv) On Gov only conform
 - e) Opp: Universities a force for change
 - i) Students can debate, learn critical thinking
 - f) Gov: Universities just conform to each new administration
 - i) No view or opinion on any topic
 - ii) Don't stand for anything
- 6) Prime Minister Rebuttal**
- a) Intro
 - b) G1: Columbia extreme?
 - i) Univ. of Chicago, UConn, Univ. of Michigan, Univ. of Virginia have adopted IN
 - ii) Opp claims this is extreme
 - c) Enforcement and G3?
 - i) Gov does not need a plan in parli debate
 - d) Values? Students, etc., can argue, not political
 - e) Alienation?
 - i) Student voices need safe environment to be heard
 - f) Stance and Funding?
 - i) Now down due to increased extremism
 - g) Discourse?

- i) Does not require an official stance
- ii) Classes and conversations still occur
- iii) We've provided additional examples
- h) College funding not for political stance
 - i) Unethical if it was
- i) Our framework was what is best for education, safety, political discourse
 - i) Gov IN protects funding and permits diversity