

A Coach's Notes¹

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Introduction

This is the first edition of the 2011-12 CDA season. Previous year's editions can be found through the [Training Materials](#) page on the [CDA web site](#). Accompanying this document are my notes from the three breakout rounds discussed in two formats, transcript and flow chart. I try to email these Notes to CDA coaches within two weeks of the tournament.

These Notes are intended for your benefit in coaching your teams and for the students to use directly. I hope that you will find them useful teaching tools. Please feel free to make copies and distribute them to your debaters.

I appreciate any feedback you have, good and bad. The best comments and suggestions will find their way into subsequent issues. I would also consider publishing signed, reasoned comments or replies from coaches or students in subsequent issues. So if you would like to reply to my comments or sound off on some aspect of the debate topic or the CDA, I look forward to your email.

Parli and CDA

I had the pleasure of judging the three breakout rounds in the Parliamentary Division at this year's Yale Invitational. Teams from CDA schools have made up almost half of the field the two years this event has been offered, and about the same share of the Osterweis Tournament in the spring.

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However, Parliamentary or “Parli” is not our usual format. CDA’s debate format is the same as policy debate as practiced by the National Forensic League. The only difference in format is that the constructive speeches are six minute instead of eight.

A bigger difference is that NFL policy debate uses the same resolution for the entire year. Debaters have the entire summer to do research and prepare cases. In the CDA we use a different resolution for each tournament, and only announce it one hour before the first round. Research is limited to the packet distributed with the resolution, and a dictionary, almanac and copy of the US Constitution if the debaters choose to bring them.

Limited time and materials are good practice for Parli, where the resolutions are selected 15 minutes before the round starts. While the time available is much shorter than in CDA, and there are no research materials, the Parli resolutions are usually much more broadly drawn with less reliance on specific information. On balance, debating in CDA is good practice for Parli.

I judged three rounds at the Yale Invitational, all with at least one CDA team. My notes on each round are available in transcript and flowchart format. There is also a list of all the resolutions used in all of the rounds of the tournament. These can all be found on the [CDA website](#).

There is more to Parli than being quick coming up with a case. CDA debaters are well advised to learn a bit more about the format, and then think about how to adapt their policy style to the needs of Parli. What follows are some suggestions based on what I saw in each round.

Quarter-Final Round

Two CDA teams faced each other in the quarter-final round that I judged. Take a look at my notes for a minute. See anything odd?

No one asked any questions! (They would be in **bold face** in the notes.)

We’re all very polite in CDA. During the speeches we speak, and during cross-ex we ask questions. No one interrupts. Actually in the US we are all very polite, as speeches and questions are all neatly divided in Policy, Lincoln-Douglas and Public Forum debate.

British Parliamentary tradition is a bit more rough and tumble. If you want to ask a question, you have to interrupt the speaker. You may even heckle the speaker with comments or by pounding the table or stamping your feet (all within reason, of course). (On the other hand, you may recall the reaction when Rep. Joe Wilson yelled out “You lie!” during Obama’s September 2009 speech to a joint session of Congress?)

High school parliamentary debate is a bit more civil, but the fact remains: if you want to ask a question you must interrupt the speaker. And that leads to two further complications. First, the speaker has the option of refusing to accept a question. Second, as the speaker moves on, a question may lose its relevance: the “Gotcha!” moment passes and you need to come up with a new question.

Four Types of Question

Parliamentary debate admits three types of questions, with different rules and contexts for each.

A *Point of Clarification* is asked near the beginning of the round, immediately after the Prime Minister has laid out his interpretation of the resolution. The purpose is to make sure everyone understands what the Government has decided the debate will be about. If the PM presents something that you don't understand or know nothing about or is unclear, you should stand and say "point of clarification." Time stops while you ask your question and the PM provides an explanation. The PM must accept this type of question. Points of Clarification are only asked by the Opposition.

Asking a Point of Clarification is like questioning the Affirmative's definitions in policy debate. You must do it at your first opportunity. You cannot ask a Point of Clarification later in the debate, because it is assumed you understand and accept the issue if you fail to question it early on.

A Point of Clarification should be brief. It should be definitional, a "what does this mean" sort of question. Attempts to probe or weaken the case, or to sneak in an argument are not permitted. If you don't understand what the Government is going on about or feel their exposition glosses over important details, you should find out. On the other hand, your question gives the Government a chance to respond, so try not to ask something lame or obvious or that gives the Government a chance to strengthen their case.

A *Point of Information* is the type of question we most often see in cross-ex in CDA, policy debate and Lincoln-Douglas debate. The purpose is to expose a flaw in your opponent's case. To raise a Point of Information you stand, place one hand on the top of your head (a nod to British Parliamentarians who needed to keep their wigs in place when they stood and gestured) and stretch out your other hand to attract attention ("then you do the hokey pokey and your turn yourself about..."). The speaker should acknowledge the other team would like to make a point, but need not accept it. The speaker might say "I'll get to you" or "Let me finish and I'll take your point" or simply "I'll take your point." Alternatively the speaker may say "I don't have time" or "Not now" or simply wave you away. Points of Information are generally not permitted during the first and last minute of a speech, and during the two rebuttals.

A Point of Information may be formulated as a question, or as a short statement, for example correcting a misstatement of fact or of your argument by the speaker. One source² suggests four uses: clarification, if the speaker is not understood; to highlight inconsistencies; to insert a reminder of your case, if the speaker misstates or ignores what you have said; and to offer information, usually in the form of an example or fact that works against the speaker's argument. You might even offer a witty remark that undermines the speaker, though this should be done very carefully.

The speaker need not accept a Point of Information. The clock does not stop, so accepting eats into the speaker's time. Points of Information are expected to be stated concisely, and there is no right to follow up. You make your point and the speaker then

² Knapp, Tricia Goodnow, and Lawrence A Galizio, *Elements of Parliamentary Debate: A Guide to Public Argument*, Addison-Wesley 1999. This is a useful text on debate from the parliamentary style. Chapter 17, p. 129-137 discusses the various types of questions.

disposes of it as he chooses. You must rely on the judge to evaluate the quality of both the question and the answer. The American Parliamentary Debate Association, one of the two college parliamentary leagues, suggests³ that the other team should rise three to five times during a speech, and a speaker should accept twice. Accepting too few looks like you are stonewalling, and too many will waste your speaking time. Failing to rise with a question makes you look like you are not engaged.

The question must be in context to have an impact. A great question two minutes into a speech that is waved off may be a terrible question if it is accepted and asked a minute later: the speaker is no longer talking about the same issue. If your Point of Information isn't accepted promptly, pay attention to the speaker and move on. Come up with something else.

The speaker should not only answer the point, but should also incorporate the reply into the his speech and argument. One desired effect of a Point of Information is to rattle the speaker and disrupt his presentation. A good debater will answer the point and then return to his argument; a great debater will weave the reply into his flow as if it had been intended all along.

A *Point of Order* is raised to the Judge to indicate that the speaker has violated one of the rules. Generally there are only two reasons: a speaker who exceeds the 30 second grace period on his time; or a speaker who introduces a new argument in a rebuttal.⁴ The Judge must rule on the point by declaring it “well taken” or “not well taken.” Alternatively, the Judge may “take the point under consideration” which means he needs to think about it.

Rebuttals are intended to summarize the debate for each side. Debaters who spend time in the rebuttal replying to their opponents frequently introduce new arguments, and are rarely called on it. Parliamentary debate provides a specific remedy, and it is worthwhile listening carefully to your opponents and using it.

If the rebuttal is being used to summarize the debate by comparing the arguments of the two sides, the speaker is less likely to introduce a new argument, or at least less likely to be detected doing so. However, if the speaker is responding to points in detail, you just might catch him.

Finally, a *Point of Personal Privilege* is used to respond to an insult or *ad hominem* argument by the opposing team. As debaters are expected to be courteous, there is rarely an occasion for this type of point. One may also use it to ask for conditions in the room to be adjusted, such as opening a window or closing a door, but you are probably better off getting this squared away before the debate starts.

Points and Cross-Ex

The various Points in parliamentary debate replace cross-ex. You know from your experience in CDA that cross-ex can be particularly effective in unhinging an opponent's

³ See *Debating Well: A Guide to Debate on APDA*, available on the APDA website at <http://www.parl Debate.com/articles/DebatingWell.pdf> .

⁴ There is an exception to the rule of “no new arguments in rebuttal” in parliamentary debate. The Prime Minister may introduce a new argument in his rebuttal in reply to new arguments presented in the Member of the Opposition constructive, because his rebuttal is the first time the Government has a chance to reply to that speech.

case. The Point of Information in parliamentary can be equally effective. But to make your point you must be more aware of what your opponent is saying and aggressive in inserting yourself into the flow of the speech.

As a speaker, you must be prepared to be interrupted. A good Judge will hold it against you if you refuse to accept a reasonable number of your opponent's points. Expect to accept at least two per speech. It is probably good strategy to accept one as early as possible to give you more time to recover, and another before the midpoint of your speech to free up the second half.

It is essential, when you prepare for parliamentary at the Yale Invitational or Osterweis, that you review the various Points and the rules for their use.

Semi-Final Round

The Government case in the semi-final round that I judged was unexpected. That is, I and the two Yale Debate Association members on the judging panel with me did not expect the Government to interpret the resolution as they did, and there was some question as to whether to permit it. Since the Opposition team took the case in stride and the argument was nearly even, we chose to accept it and to decide the round on the merits.

The resolution selected was "This House would not cheat even if it would not get caught." The Government stated:

We will link the resolution to a substantive interpretation:

- i) We consider US manufacturing corporations*
- ii) That they should not dodge, evade or negate environmental regulations*
- iii) Even if they are not fined or shut down if they do*

This is what is known as a "linked case" and is often used when arguing the resolution as written would lead to a lot of broad, unspecific arguments and for that reason an unproductive round. The Government uses its right to define terms to link the resolution to a specific issue that retains the spirit of the resolution in order to bring the round into a more concrete sphere. For example, one might link the motion, "This House believes red is better than blue" to arguing that socialism is better than capitalism, based on the colors their proponents often fly (think Russia and the US).

A linkable resolution or motion is also sometimes referred to as an open resolution. This is in contrast to a straight or closed motion or resolution, which is what we use in CDA.⁵ The quarter-final round motion, "This House would militarily intervene to prevent Iran from getting the bomb," may permit some variations on when and how and by whom, but the main lines of contention are pretty well fixed.

While linked cases are common on the college circuit, they have been specifically prohibited from the Osterweis tournament in the past, and the motions chosen to avoid them. But the prohibition does not appear in the version of the Osterweis style guide posted for the Yale Invitational, and was not mentioned to the debaters prior to the start

⁵ See, *Art, Argument and Advocacy: Mastering Parliamentary Debate*, Meany, John, and Kate Shuster, International Debate Education Association, 2002, p. 32.

of the tournament. And of course, unlike most of the motions chosen, this one on cheating really does beg for a link.

Dealing with a Link

As noted, a link is simply the Government using its right to define terms to limit the scope of the debate. The Opposition may accept, refuse or propose an alternate definition. Note this a good place to use a Point of Clarification if you don't understand the link.

If you accept the definition, you must debate the case the Government has presented. This is one of the things that makes Parliamentary debate interesting: it is very difficult for the Opposition to anticipate where a linkable motion will end up. Whatever you have prepared in the 15 minutes before the round may not be usable.

To refuse the link you need an argument. Legitimate reasons to refuse the link are the same as those to contest the Affirmative's definitions in a policy debate. First, the link may not accord with common usage of the language. This attack is much harder to use in Parliamentary than in CDA policy debate. A linkable motion is meant to encourage the Government to stretch its meaning in order to create an interesting and entertaining debate. Puns are encouraged at the college level.

The more effective argument is that the Government interpretation does not leave the Opposition with sufficient grounds to win the debate or relies on knowledge the Opposition is not likely to possess. In our "red is better than blue" example, a biology major might suggest a discussion of the benefits of red over blue-green algae. Most of the rest of us would be at a loss to reply.

What Happened Here

In this round I don't believe the Opposition understood the concept of a link. In the LOC they accept the Government interpretation, but go on to argue that the Government case is just one example of many. The Opposition then presents several other examples as part of their case.

In my opinion, this weakened their position. When you accept the link, you have to argue the Government's interpretation. There are plenty of arguments why corporations would violate environmental regulations, and plenty of cases where they do even in the face of steep penalties. In fact, there are any number of examples of corporate law breaking in general the Opposition can use to bolster their case.

The Member of the Government pointed out that the Opposition has not provided sufficient reason to change the terms of the debate, and the Prime Minister reminded the Judges of this in the rebuttal. The Opposition was spread thin by its own examples and spent insufficient time on the Government case.

Lessons to Be Learned

Debate is debate, but each debate format has its own quirks and customs. When you prepare for Parliamentary in the Yale Invitational or the Osterweis, you need to review and understand the format. We've noted above how cross-ex is different. The lesson from this round is to understand the difference between a straight and a linkable resolution, and be ready for either.

With a linked case, you will probably have to abandon some or all of the arguments you drafted during prep time and put something together while listening to the Prime Minister's Constructive. A Point of Clarification raised right after the link is presented is a good way to slow the Government down, make sure you understand where the Government is going, and give yourself a few more seconds to think.

If you are presented with a linkable motion while on Government, you need to recognize it as such and come up with a good interpretation. Remember you don't have to argue an abstraction like "This House would choose death before dishonor." You can bring it down to earth and argue something more concrete, such as the wisdom of bringing back dueling.

As a CDA debater you are good at coming up with arguments. To adapt to Parliamentary, you need to practice interpreting motions. Use the list from Yale, or search the web for Parliamentary debate sites⁶ for past motions to practice on. Decide which are linkable and which are straight. For the linkable motions, see how many legitimate interpretations you can come up with, and what you might argue in reply.

Final Round

The final round was a solid parliamentary debate: straight motion ("This House would ban protests at military funerals"), lots of questions (there were more attempts than those accepted and noted in the transcript), good clash on both sides. While Government loses the decision, there is one thing worth noting.

In presenting their first contention, the Prime Minister introduces a value criterion: "benefits and harms should be measured against their impact on US citizens". A value criterion is a feature of Lincoln-Douglas debate, usually presented as a value that the speaker believes is inherent in the resolution and a criterion to judge which side of the issue best supports the value.

This isn't a Lincoln-Douglas debate, but the motion does lend itself to L-D treatment. The issue is a clash between the rights of protestors and the rights of military families. Alternatively, you can look at it as a clash between freedom of speech and freedom from interference. The Judge needs a standard to compare the two. The Government proposes one: which side has the greatest impact on US citizens.

I am not suggesting you switch to L-D, but the concept of a criterion is useful in any form of debate: CDA, parliamentary, policy or L-D. In debate you are asking the Judge to compare two positions, and choose one on the basis of that comparison. Debaters often forget to provide the judge with a standard which to apply to the arguments and make that comparison. Instead, they say things like "harassment," "negative image," "desensitize" and "free speech" assuming that this is enough.

In this case, the protests are harassment, are an attempt to create a negative image, probably do desensitize. Banning them would violate the protesters right of free speech. So how does one decide? Or, how do you explain to the Judge how he should decide?

⁶⁶ The two major college leagues are the American Parliamentary Debate Association, (APDA) at <http://www.apdaweb.org/>, and the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) at <http://www.parlidedebate.org/>. It may take you a while, but they both have useful information and links.

The Government value criterion in this instance is pretty broad and unspecific: what sort kind of impact on US citizens? Is physical or mental, actual or potential harm more important? Is it the size of the impact or the number of citizens affected? Suppose it has a big negative impact on a few and a small positive impact on many? What if you propose one criteria and your opponent proposes another? In a debate everything may be contested, even the standards used.

My point isn't the criterion, it's that the act of comparison is the heart of debate. Both sides will claim good sounding things for their side of the issue and bad sounding things for the other. These things may not be easily compared—what is the balance between the distress of a family that has lost a son or a daughter and the potential loss due to limiting free speech. But the team that can find a way to compare one to the other in a way that demonstrates their side is more important is the team that will win the debate. For example:

“The distress of the families is more important than the limitation on free speech for the protestors because a funeral is an important and singular event in life, while the protestors have any number of other times and places to make their point. The harm to the families is greater than the harm to the protestors.”

“A protest is always offensive to someone, and if we suppress free speech every time it offends someone then we will have no free speech at all. We will all be diminished by suppressing protests, and this harm to us all exceeds the harm to the families.”

Debaters often use words like “proof” and “certain” when the questions we debate are chosen because they do not admit to proof or certainty. You do better to compare the two sides and let the judge see the strength of your case relative to your opponents.