

confident you can prove that U.S. military intervention in Darfur is an example of “public health assistance.” If you lose an average of one or more rounds per tournament on topicality, you should consider moving to a more clearly topical case.

DECISION PARADIGMS

What must an affirmative team prove to win the debate? These standards for decision are called *paradigms*. The traditional paradigm is the stock issues, as discussed in Chapter 5.

A stock issues approach is based on a *legal model*. In this legal model, the affirmative team is equivalent to the prosecution. The prosecution must overcome a presumption of innocence. Similarly in the stock issues paradigm, the present system is presumed innocent until proven guilty. How does the prosecution overcome the presumption of innocence? It must prove (beyond reasonable doubt) all the elements of a crime. If the crime is first-degree murder, certain elements of the crime can be established by state law, including opportunity, motive, and premeditation. The prosecution must prove every element of the crime to gain a conviction. Similarly in debate, the affirmative team must win every stock issue to overcome presumption and win the debate. The stock issues of topicality, significance of harm, inherency, solvency, and desirability must all be decided in favor of the affirmative for the judge to award an affirmative win.

A policy-making paradigm is based on a *legislative model*. The policy-making model—also called a *comparative advantage model*—focuses on desirability, asking whether the advantages of change outweigh the disadvantages. This model effectively does away with the notion of presumption. Defenders of a policy-making approach object to the stock issues model as having a conservative political bias. Why, they ask, should there be a presumption against change? Robert Kennedy often used the following quotation from George Bernard Shaw in his speeches: “Some men see things as they are and ask why. Others dream things that never were and ask why not.” The legal model provides a presumption of innocence to persons accused of crime as a way of ensuring important civil liberties. But this analogy doesn’t properly apply to political decision-making. Why should existing policies be given a presumption of innocence?

Although a compelling case can be made for the policy model, it doesn’t really justify doing away entirely with the traditional stock issues. Most judges using a policy-making model still consider topicality an independent voting issue for the negative team. This follows a standard of germaneness required in nearly all legislative sessions. If the topic on the floor is “U.S. public health assistance for sub-Saharan Africa,” the chair would normally rule out of order a motion to establish a system of national health