

CHAPTER 7

NEGATIVE STRATEGY IN POLICY DEBATE

Unlike affirmative teams, negative policy debaters cannot script their first constructive speech. The negative team is expected to respond specifically to the example of the resolution advocated in the affirmative case. If the resolution calls for increasing public health assistance to sub-Saharan Africa, the particular affirmative case might focus on HIV/ AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, malnutrition, maternal health, sanitary waste disposal, or numerous other possibilities.

In the typical debate tournament, there is seldom more than twenty or thirty minutes between the time a round pairing is posted and the time the debate is expected to begin. Most of the allotted time is taken up just by moving all the debate materials to the assigned room. This means there will be little time before the round begins for planning a negative strategy. Sometimes just knowing the identity of the affirmative team will disclose the case area. If the affirmative team used a given case in a previous tournament or in an earlier round of the current tournament, the case will likely remain the same. Often, however, the negative team will not know the particular focus of the affirmative case until the first affirmative speech has actually begun.

This uncertainty about the affirmative case area means the negative team must enter a tournament with pre-prepared strategies for all the likely affirmative cases.

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING A NEGATIVE STRATEGY

1. *Advocate something.* You will be more persuasive when you let the judge know what you are for, not just what you are against. If the affirmative proposes federal subsidies for the development of energy alternatives, you can advocate free enterprise solutions. If the affirmative proposes increases in U.S. foreign aid for sub-Saharan Africa, you can advocate international alternatives. If the affirmative wants to expand wind power, you can advocate reliance on nuclear power.

My suggestion that you should advocate something might sound as if I am telling you to use a counterplan in every debate. That is certainly not my intention. Advocacy can latch onto something the present system is already doing. You can argue that the present system follows a free enterprise approach rather than