

affirmative harms. Consider the possibility of a negative counterplan calling for the United States to join an international consortium to promote research into renewable energy alternatives. Such a counterplan wouldn't even pretend to solve for U.S. energy independence. Instead, the negative team could argue that massive government subsidies to U.S. energy companies will violate existing rules in the World Trade Organization against subsidizing domestic industry. The negative disadvantage would argue that domestic energy subsidies would cause a trade war, trigger another Arab oil embargo, and ultimately lead to world recession or depression. By engaging the world community in a cooperative endeavor, the counterplan would avoid an economic collapse while contributing to long-term energy solutions.

DECIDING WHEN TO USE A COUNTERPLAN

Before deciding to use a counterplan, ask the following questions:

- Will the judge accept a counterplan?
- Is the present system indefensible?
- Do inherency arguments offer an alternative to the counterplan?
- Am I confident that I understand counterplan theory?
- Does the counterplan seem intuitively persuasive?

First, does your judge like counterplans? How would you know this? In many tournaments judge philosophies are available to contestants. A common question on judge philosophy questionnaires asks what the judge thinks about counterplans. If you don't have access to judge philosophies, you might be able to ask the judge some questions before the round begins. If you are contemplating using a counterplan, you might simply ask the judge, "What do you think about counterplans?" If you know that your judge isn't comfortable with counterplans, it is simply unwise to introduce one.

Some debaters make the mistake of assuming that lay judges— meaning judges who have not coached or participated in debate—will dislike counterplans. You can make a counterplan seem persuasive to an inexperienced judge by simply explaining that you are opposing the resolution because a superior option is available. The fact that lay judges are unfamiliar with counterplan requirements can actually work to the advantage of the negative team.

A second consideration in choosing a counterplan is whether you are able to defend the present system. On some topics you might be personally convinced that the present system is indefensible.

If the topic deals with public health in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, you might feel uncomfortable trying to argue that the present system is doing enough to prevent the