

CHAPTER 12

VALUE HIERARCHIES AND PHILOSOPHY IN LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Lincoln-Douglas debate focuses on values. Successful debaters must become adept at selecting and comparing values. This chapter provides a brief description of the most common core values in Lincoln-Douglas debate along with a discussion of the standards used for the weighing of values.

CORE VALUES IN LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Freedom: The United States Declaration of Independence held it to be self-evident that liberty is an inalienable right. The Bill of Rights gives detail to numerous specific freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, freedom to keep and bear arms, freedom of religion, freedom to petition the government for redress of grievances, freedom from self-incrimination, freedom from cruel and unusual punishment, and freedom from random search and seizure. Later amendments to the Constitution added freedom from slavery and freedom for women to vote.

Freedom (or liberty) is not a single value, but a family of closely related values. Any one of the freedoms enumerated in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights could become the core value focus in a Lincoln-Douglas round of debate. All these freedoms describe a system of limited government. The Founding Fathers' commitment to limited government arose from their frustration with the British monarchy. The love of liberty also was informed by the writings of political philosophers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Charles de Montesquieu. In his two *Treatises on Government* (1690), Locke discredits the divine right of monarchy and claimed that "life, liberty, and property" are all natural rights—the loss of any one of those three would mean the loss of the other two. Rousseau's opening line in *The Social Contract* (1762) is that "man is born free and everywhere he is in chains." Rousseau actually proposed a system of preserving civil liberties through the creation of a contract between a government and its people. Montesquieu, writing in *The Spirit of Laws* (1648), advises that personal liberty could best be ensured when government is based on a division of powers and the creation of an independent judiciary.

Safety: All members of the human species have a need for security—the need to feel safe from bodily harm. We want to protect ourselves, our families, our communities, and our nation from violent crime, environmental harm, international terrorism, and