

The construction of team cases is discussed below. The point to note here is that motions expressed as general principles must be proven true as general principles. A single example will neither prove nor disprove a general principle. Finding arguments that explain the majority of examples will be more important.

(c) Allowing for a reasonable debate

Because the definition must be reasonable, if there is no obvious meaning to the motion, the range of possible meanings is limited to those that allow for a reasonable debate. In other words, if the person setting the motion has failed to frame a clear issue for debate, the Proposition must define the motion in such a way as to provide an issue for debate.

As mentioned, the organisers of World Schools Championships endeavour to set motions which pose clear issues for debate. Proposition teams that fail to take the obvious meanings of such motions often do so with a view to reducing the Opposition's room for debate.

The dangers were illustrated in a national final on the motion 'This House believes that we need a world government'. The wording appeared specific enough, as did the issue involved. The United Nations is not a world government. Did the state of the world today require a governing body with a lot more power and could this be made to work? What would the dangers be and could these be surmounted? The Proposition team chose to take an unexpected definition of the motion and ended up arguing that there should be a new body that was similar to but more effective than the International Criminal Court then being established, and that it should have the ability to deal with the most terrible crimes against humanity, such as genocide. Such a body could hardly be what was meant by the concept of a 'world government', yet the Proposition proceeded to run its debate on this basis. Presumably the intent was to make the Opposition's preparation redundant and, by changing the issue to be debated, to frame the debate in such a way that this significantly increased the burden on the Opposition (witnessed by members of the Proposition issuing challenges such as 'do you want people to be able to commit genocide without being punished?' throughout the debate). The Proposition's definition can be condemned as (i) having ignored the obvious meaning of the motion (which provided a clear issue for debate) and (ii) having set up an alternative meaning of the motion designed to be one-sided.

The Rules of the World Schools Championships outlaw definitions that are truistic or tautological. Such definitions do not leave the Opposition *any* room for debate.

Truisms

A truism is something that is obviously true.

It would be a truism to define the motion 'This House believes that the sun is rising in the East' literally. The Opposition would have nothing to say to three speeches that discussed the manner in which the earth revolved around the sun. In terms of the questions posed above, the Opposition should be asking whether there is a clear issue to be debated. There is no issue as to whether the sun actually rises in the East.

On the other hand, what might the ordinary intelligent person believe the motion means? Taking it as a metaphor for Asia ('the East') becoming much more important in the world ('the sun is rising') seems eminently sensible: this poses a very real issue for both sides to