

correct. The two teams' arguments and examples may end up having little to do with each other, and there might as well be two parallel debates. For both teams and audience, the result is tedious. A lot will hinge on the adjudicators' opinion as to whether the definition was unreasonable or not. If the Opposition believes the matter is dicey, and the adjudicators might side with the Proposition, it may make more sense to accept the definition, borderline as it is.

Often when Proposition teams prepare surprise definitions, they put more effort into twisting the definition than to preparing solid cases. If the Opposition feels that what the First Speaker of the Proposition actually said (definition aside) is eminently rebuttable, it may wish to abandon its prepared case (or adapt what it can from this) and take the Proposition on its own ground. The Opposition may mention in passing the unexpected nature of the Proposition's definition which, presuming the audience agrees, may win it some sympathy. The adjudicators will also give credit to an Opposition that takes an unexpected definition in its stride.

The national final on the motion 'This House believes that we need a world government' has already been mentioned. The Proposition team gave an unexpected definition, 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. The Opposition team, while well aware that this sort of body did not begin to encompass what was meant by a 'world government' (although effectively punishing people who committed crimes against humanity might constitute a small sub-set of a world government's role), decided to accept the definition and avoid a definition debate in front of several hundred guests. The Opposition went on to argue there was no 'need' for the sort of body proposed by the Proposition, as the specifics of what they were suggesting ('the model' they were proposing) was little different from the International Criminal Court and would have the same degree of effectiveness. Since the Proposition was not proposing to transform the world order, there was likely to be little change.

(b) Challenge

The second option for the Opposition is to challenge the Proposition's definition, arguing it is unreasonable. The Opposition will have to explain exactly why it is unreasonable, then put up an alternative (and reasonable) definition, before proceeding to advance arguments and examples based on its own definition. It will meanwhile ignore the arguments and examples the Proposition has put forward (based, as they are, on an unreasonable definition).

The problems of a definition debate are canvassed above, but the Opposition may feel the Proposition's definition to be so grossly unreasonable, it has no choice but to challenge it. If the Proposition is arguing a truism or tautology, the Opposition must challenge the definition, or it would otherwise be shouldering an impossible burden. (Neither of the other options mentioned below is available for a truism or tautology.)

As mentioned above, unless the First Speaker of the Opposition challenges the definition, it is deemed to be accepted. The Judging Schedule to the Rules of the World Schools Debating Championships provide that the Opposition 'may not challenge the definition in any other speech unless the [Proposition...] significantly alters the definition in their subsequent speeches.'

The 'content' of definition debates hinges on which team presented the better arguments about the definition and which team then put forward the better case based on its own version of the definition. The definition having become the most important issue in the debate, it is marked accordingly. It is therefore vital that each team sticks to its definition. Even if the Proposition's