

When presenting an example, it is important that it be fully explained. It is better to mention a few examples well, linking them carefully to arguments just made, and explaining why they are relevant and significant to the debate, than merely to list a series of examples without proper clarification.

(d) Restrictive Cases

A lot has been said about the definition and about constructing cases. The aim is to make definitional issues less prominent, not more; for teams to debate the motion set, not the motion one team prefers.

The dangers of unexpected definitions and restrictive cases were illustrated in the final stages of the 2002 World Schools Debating Championships in Singapore. The semi-finals motion has already been mentioned. One of the proposition teams defined 'This House would compromise civil liberties in the interest of security' to mean that all countries should adopt a system of national identification cards (this compromise of civil liberties being warranted by the security benefits that would result). The Proposition in the Grand Final debate affirmed 'This House believes that the media has become too powerful' by claiming the media had become overly intrusive into the private lives of citizens.

Both cases were restrictive. The Proposition in the semi-final mentioned sought to restrict a general debate to a single *example*. The Proposition in the Grand Final was restricting its case to a single *argument*. The former approach was open to challenge; the latter was not.

The semi-final Proposition was effectively suggesting that if it proved a system of national identification cards to be beneficial, it would have proved that civil liberties should be compromised in the interest of security. The logic was faulty. At most, the Proposition would have proved the general principle true with respect to a single example. The Proposition having no grounds for narrowing a debate of general application to a single, specific example, the Opposition team was entitled not only to question the validity of the Proposition's example, but also to suggest that other examples proved the converse. The fact that the Proposition was restricting the motion to a much more specific level of abstraction than had been set is demonstrated by trying to write the team's case as a 'because statement'. 'Civil liberties should be compromised in the interest of security *because* a system of national identification cards is beneficial' becomes nonsensical. The Proposition First Speaker spent most of his first speech talking about the mechanics of a national identification card (how it would be issued, updated, and replacement procedures in the event it was lost), itself an indicator of how peripheral his speech had become to the actual motion. Setting out a detailed model as to *how* a national identification card system might work was no substitute for providing reasons as to *why* civil liberties should be compromised in the interest of security.

The Proposition's case in the Grand Final makes sense when expressed as a 'because statement'. 'The media has become too powerful *because* it is now overly intrusive into the private lives of citizens' suffers no problems of logic or coherence. While the Opposition might be surprised that the Proposition had decided to rest its case on a single argument (media intrusion into the private lives of citizens) when there were a variety of other arguments available for claiming the media has become too powerful (ownership concentrations; the media's effect on public perceptions of politicians and public figures; biased and distorted news coverage), there is no necessity for the Proposition to raise every