A Coach's Notes[1]

Everett Rutan
ejrutan3@ctdebate.org

Connecticut Debate Association
Amity, Housatonic Valley and New Canaan High Schools
November 14, 2015

Resolved: The US should approve the Trans-Pacific Partnership treaty.

Contents
▪ **Introduction**
▪ **Choosing the Resolution**
▪ **Rules Again**
▪ **Explain It to Me**

Introduction

This is the November edition for the 2015-16 CDA season. Previous year's editions can be found through the Training Materials page on the CDA web site. Accompanying this document are my notes from the final round at Amity High School presented in two formats, transcript and flow chart.

These Notes are intended for your benefit in coaching your teams and for the students to use directly. I hope that you will find them useful. Please feel free to make copies and distribute them to your debaters.

I appreciate any feedback you have, good and bad. The best comments and suggestions will find their way into subsequent issues. I would also consider publishing signed, reasoned comments or replies from coaches or students. So if you would like to reply to my comments or sound off on some aspect of the debate topic or the CDA, I look forward to your email.

Choosing the Resolution

I've received several comments that this was a difficult resolution. But all resolutions are difficult in proportion to how little or how much you already know about the topic. A few comments, then, on choosing the topic/resolution and creating the packet that may help you prepare going forward.

Topic/Resolution

It should be no secret that I prefer topics that are current and important. If you follow the news regularly, no CDA topic or resolution should be totally unfamiliar to you.

While the Trans-Pacific Partnership treaty has been in process for almost a decade, it has been in and out of the news for much of 2015. In April and May Congress considered and passed a bill for "fast-track approval" of TPP, which meant that they agreed to vote the agreement up or down with no amendments. (Letting Congress amend a treaty is problematic in that any amendment means the treaty must go back to every country signing it for re-negotiation and approval, an almost impossible process.) On October 5 the treaty was agreed by the 12 signing countries. And on November 5 the text was released and submitted to Congress for approval. So TPP hit the news pretty hard three times in the past year.

I also feel it is important that CDA standards match those of other debate leagues, in particular the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA, formerly known as the National Forensic League or NFL). If you go to their web site, http://www.speechanddebate.org/ , you can see the resolutions used for Policy, Lincoln-Douglas and Public Forum debate. You can find a file with 20 years of past CDA resolutions on our website. I like to think that we compare favorably.

The Packet

The packet is designed to work in your favor. The first article after the resolution is chosen to explain the topic if it is unfamiliar or specific. After that we try to alternate Affirmative and Negative oriented articles. You usually find enough in the first half of the packet to build a case for each side, though reading further adds more detailed and intricate arguments.

TPP is a very specific item—though the specifics probably didn't factor in any round—so this month started with background and summary from Wikipedia. This is followed by a short note from the Office of the US Trade Representative, the government office responsible for negotiating the treaty, listing its advantages. Then The Public Citizen outlines the disadvantages. The middle of the packet is a long, thoughtful article by David Coates which considers both sides in a very balanced way. It's a bit long, but by the point it ends on page 7 you have the details you need to support the two summary articles that precede it.

You do need to choose a strategy to use the packet effectively. In my notes for November 2008 I suggest how to divide the hour of preparation before the first round into specific tasks. And you need to practice that strategy.

Preparing for Debate

There are a number of things you can do to help you prepare for CDA debate:

1. Follow the news regularly. I mean the national and state level news, not stories about traffic accidents or lost pets. If a subject area comes up that you are unfamiliar with, do some research. The internet makes that very easy. I recommend you always start with Wikipedia before moving on to Google.

2. Review past CDA resolutions. If you are unfamiliar with the topic, read the packet. Our website has packets back to 2005-06 and resolutions back to 1995. If you need more information, go to the internet.

3. Practice case preparation. Take a packet, sit down with your partner, and give yourself one hour. Read my notes for November 2008 for suggestions on how to design a plan to use that hour efficiently. Once you are finished, spend a second hour critiquing the Aff and Neg cases you prepared. Look up the things you don't know. If you did this twice a week you will have covered a large number of topic by the end of the first year. Remember the process is cumulative!

If you are serious about debate, one or two hours a week at a team meeting isn't enough. Most sports require 2-3 hours or more of practice per day! Why should debate be any different?

Suggest a Topic

If you would like to suggest a topic or resolution, put together a proposal and email me. I can't promise that we will use it or, out of fairness, tell you when. But we are always looking for good ideas. I do know that some debaters spend time each month trying to forecast what topics might come up.

There is a catch. You can't just suggest a topic. That would be too easy. You have to provide some explanation about why it is important, why it would be a good topic for CDA, and why it will be fair for both sides in the round. That means you will have to spend some time researching the topic and possible arguments for or against.

For example, last year it was suggested that requiring all foods containing genetically modified ingredients be labeled as such. It sounds great. But the one of the first articles I found on the internet stated that labels on food saying they were GMO-free were over 99% accurate. Any Aff case falls to a Neg argument/counterplan that voluntary labeling gives consumers the information they need and, to the extent consumers want GMO-free food, there is an economic incentive for GMO-free producers to provide that labeling. Truth-in-labeling laws ensure continued accuracy. Any fair packet will include this information, and it leaves no grounds for a good Aff against a good Neg.

Rules Again

In the final round at Amity the Second Affirmative began his constructive by saying Aff never presented a problem in the status quo, and that Aff was "required to do this under CDA rules." This is nonsense.

To the extent CDA has any rules they are in the Handbook and the Judges Handout, both available on the website. Neither says anything about how debaters are required to construct a case or present an argument. There are specifics about the order and timing of the speeches that are enforced. There are descriptions of the sorts of things good teams do. But there is nothing in any official document that requires debaters to use any structure, format or particular argument.

All of my writing is clearly labeled as entirely my opinion. I have a lot of debate experience, and I think I provide a lot of useful advice. But you—and all CDA judges

and coaches—are free to ignore it if you have a different or better idea. (And if you have a better idea, please share it with me and we can find a way to share it with the rest of the league!) While I have talked about the stock case (harm-inherency-solvency-advantages) several times, nowhere have I ever said it's use is required.

So, let me repeat myself on rules. Beyond the order and timing of the speeches and general rules of decorum:

<div align="center">

THERE ARE NO RULES OF DEBATE!

</div>

What I mean by this is that, while there are texts on argument and debate that go back at least to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, all of this is just the collected wisdom of the ages. Your objective in a debate is to persuade the judge to vote for you. Whatever persuades the judge is the right thing to do. Most of the time you are foolish to ignore the collected experience of philosophers, coaches, debaters and gifted amateurs like me. But every once in a while, something else works a lot better. There is no reason to believe that the book of argument is closed to new ideas.

Explain It to Me

Most debaters I see tend to "debate by assertion." That is just one part of a complete argument (here's the wisdom of the ages again). The other two are the explanation and evidence that support it, sometimes called the warrant; and the impact or why it's important.[2] I particularly favor debaters who provide a good explanation, and debaters who don't explain things generally do worse for the omission.

Explanation is both an offensive and defensive tool. On offense, a contention that is clearly explained to the judge is far more persuasive than one that is simply asserted, or is supported with a few facts or quotes. On defense, the most powerful argument you can make in debate is one that turns your one of your opponent's arguments in your favor. A "turn" is done entirely by means of an alternate explanation of the details provided by the other team.

A good example from this round is the Affirmative's second contention: the TPP provides economic benefits to the US. To support it, the First Affirmative cites some facts from the packet:

1. TPP eliminates over 18,000 tariffs
2. This will increase the number of jobs, especially for small businesses
3. TPP is worth $14Bn per year by 2025
4. Free trade is responsible for $13,000/year increase in family income over the past years
5. 90% of consumers in the world are located outside of the US
6. TPP increases US role in world economy

The first and fifth items are statements of fact. The other four are all impact statements. What's missing is any discussion of the mechanism: how, exactly, does eliminating

---

[2] This is a modified version of the Toulmin Model of Argument, a version of which appears in most debate texts. The simplified claim—explanation—impact is nicely suited to high school debate. For Toulmin's original presentation see *The Uses of Argument*, 1958 and subsequent editions.

18,000 tariffs result in the various increases in economic activity? And how does the fact about 90% of the world's consumers fit in?

Let's put the argument into the three-part format: claim, explanation, impact. I'll highlight the parts I add.

> **Claim:** The TPP provides *significant* economic benefits to the US.
>
> **Explanation:** *Tariffs are a tax on imports.[3] Existing tariffs raise the prices of goods and services produced by the US and sold in other countries, and they raise the price of goods and services produced in other countries that we want to buy.* The TPP eliminates 18,000 tariffs here and abroad. *Removing these taxes will lower the price of what we sell and what we buy. We know from economics that lower prices will increase demand. US consumers will be able to buy things more cheaply.* But 90% of the world's consumers live outside the US. *So even more this will increase demand for the products that we produce.*
>
> **Impact:** *The packet provides details of the economic results.* TPP is expected to increase the number of jobs in the US, especially for small businesses. It will result in $14 billion more trade annually by 2025. Note that past trade agreements are responsible for $13,000/yr increase in the incomes of American families. All of which increases US importance in the world economy.

The claim and the impacts are now strongly connected by the economic mechanism that explains why reducing trade barriers increases economic activity.

Now, let's suppose you are on Negative and want to turn this argument against Aff. First let's look at what Neg actually said in the round. The 1NC just presented the Neg case so the response comes in the 2NC:
1. The Aff offered no proof
2. Neg gave the examples of NAFTA and the Korean trade treaty

The first argument is an assertion which simply shows Neg wasn't listening. We saw above that Aff cites two facts and four impact statements. The second refers back to the 1NC's second contention, that TPP will lead to continued outsourcing, where Neg gives those two previous treaties as examples of trade treaties causing job losses in the US. So we have one (false) assertion and a reference to a fact from a previous contention.

Because I want to use information from the second Negative contention, N2[4], let's look at that before constructing an explanation turning the A2 against the Aff. The second Negative contention asserts that under TPP continued outsourcing will harm the US.
1. Vietnam, Indonesia and China provide cheap exports, violate human rights and engage in wage slavery
2. After NAFTA/Korean treaty jobs were lost to these countries at expense of US
3. Resolution is about the US
4. E.g., Nike's advantage over New Balance will increase forcing New Balance to outsource

This gives us three more facts in items 1, 3 and 4. But there is no real explanation presented linking them together. Let's add an explanation now, weaving information from A2, N2 and Neg's reply to A2. As above, italics indicate new material.

---

[3] Tariffs sometimes are applied to exports, but that isn't an important issue in the TPP.

[4] "N2" is my flow shorthand for the second Negative contention. "A1" would be the first Affirmative contention.

Claim: Contrary to A2, the TPP will cause significant economic harm to the US

Explanation: *Aff tells us trade will increase after TPP removes tariffs and removes other trade barriers. We agree that this will make trade easier, but that means corporations can produce goods and services in any TPP country and sell them in any other. It stands to reason they will go where production costs like labor and regulation are lowest.* Countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and China provide cheap exports by violating human rights and engaging in wage slavery. What's more, we've seen it happen before. *As we noted in our second contention,* under NAFTA and the Korean trade treaties jobs were lost in the US as corporations outsourced. Under TPP, a company like New Balance *which makes shoes in the US* will be at a further disadvantage to importer Nike, and will be forced to move its production overseas.

Impact: *Aff tells you there will be billions in increased trade and benefits, and we agree. The US will export jobs and import goods from low cost TPP countries who will reap almost all of those benefits. That's good reason for the US to reject the treaty!*

The alternate explanation is what allows Neg to turn the Aff arguments against the Affirmative case. Here Neg accepts the Aff analysis that TPP will increase trade by reducing financial and regulatory barriers. The turn comes by noting corporations can and will take advantage of lower barriers to reduce their costs by relocating production to the least expensive TPP member. Aff based their analysis on generally accepted economic logic and Neg extends the analysis by looking at likely corporate behavior. Neg doesn't deny the Aff impact, but concludes that it will not benefit the US, but other countries.

(As an exercise, review the other contentions in my notes for the final round, or better, your notes from your rounds, and break the supporting points into assertions, evidence, impacts and explanations. Restructure them into the three-part assertion—explanation—impact format used above.)

An explanation provides a stronger basis for your arguments than assertions, facts or impacts, even assertions, facts and impacts quoted directly from the packet. Trading assertions or quotes is just a "we said/they said" debate—much like this final round. The packet is designed to be balanced with material for both sides. It leaves the judge with no good reason for a decision until you provide an explanation.

Explanations can be judged by how well the story fits the facts. This gives you plenty to talk about. You can respond to assertions and facts with an explanation. You can respond to an explanation by finding errors in its logic, extending it, or presenting an alternative. You can introduce new facts that contradict or fall outside of one explanation in order to justify a new one that incorporates both.

What Is Clash?

Clash occurs when one side in a debate listens to the other and responds directly to what their opponents have said. You can clash at a number of levels. Much CDA debate is a clash of assertions, for example, the Negative's claim above that "the Aff offered no proof." This type of clash is pretty weak, "we said/they said" sort of argument.

A second level uses evidence. Aff quotes the packet saying free trade added $13,000/year to the average family's salary since 1945; Neg quotes the packet saying NAFTA and the Korean trade treaty cost American's jobs. Maybe that's a bit more

informative, but it's still a "we said/they said" argument with informed adults rather than high school students doing the talking.

Real clash, useful clash, effective clash, occurs at the level of competing explanations. This is how science works: which theory does the best job of explaining all of the data. Good debate should work the same way: which side provides the most persuasive explanation of the issues and facts. How do you win a round when the other team has more evidence and are better speakers? Do a better job explaining why their arguments are wrong and how their evidence supports your side. That's clash.