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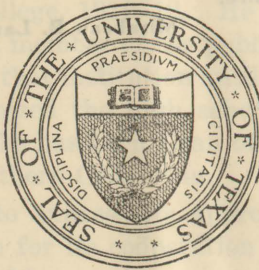
## SPEAKING CONTESTS AND SPEECH EDUCATION

BY

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The Interscholastic League Bureau

Division of Extension



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**The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.**

**Sam Houston**

**Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy. . . . It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire.**

**Mirabeau B. Lamar**

## FOREWORD

The Eighth Annual Interscholastic League Breakfast and Section Meeting, held in the ball room of Hotel Paso del Norte, El Paso, November 26, 1926, was attended by sixty-one public school men and women. The principal speaker was Dr. Ray K. Immel. His subject, "Speech Contests and Speech Education," proved so interesting to those who were present that it has been decided to give it wider circulation by printing it in the present form. A copy of this bulletin is sent free upon request to any teacher in a school that is a member of the League. A charge of 5 cents per copy is made for out-of-State circulation.

It is believed that this short statement of the aims of speech education and of the use that may legitimately be made of contests in promoting speech education will be found valuable by all teachers who are interested in speech education, and especially interesting to those who coach pupils for participation in public speaking contests.

Dean Immel was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1913 with the degree of M.A. He served as professor of oratory, Muskingum College, 1910-12. He returned to the University of Michigan as a member of the public speaking faculty in 1912 and remained with that institution until 1924. It was during this time that he organized the high school debating league of that state. Since 1924 he has been Dean of the School of Speech in the University of Southern California.

The League desires to express its appreciation to the Texas Speech Arts Association for its coöperation in securing the services of Dean Immel for this occasion.

ROY BEDICHEK,  
Chief, Interscholastic League Bureau,  
Division of Extension.

## **SPEAKING CONTESTS AND SPEECH EDUCATION**

**By Ray K. Immel, Dean, School of Speech,  
University of Southern California**

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**I**N ENTERING upon a discussion of the relation of speaking contests to speech education, it seems desirable, first, to state what is meant by speech education. Indeed, such a preliminary definition is necessary, for we speech teachers have so recently emerged from the wilderness of "elocution," "expression" and "oratory" that they are indeed few and far between who realize fully just what the speech teacher of 1926 is trying to do to our boys and girls.

### **Popular Conception of Speech Education**

It is unfortunate that this is so. It is unfortunate that the average adult, even today, believes that speech training means the preparation of Willie or Susie to astonish admiring relatives and friends with a dramatic rendition of "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight" or of "Laska, Down by the Rio Grande." And it must be said, in all fairness, that Mr. or Mrs. Average Citizen is not entirely without warrant for this belief. There are still, I am afraid, those among us whose conception of their business has not gone forward very fast in the last twenty or thirty years. At least we have them in Los Angeles. I hope the tribe is nearer extinction in Texas. They are well meaning people, but terribly misguided. And they make life sometimes hard for those of us who at least think that we have caught a broader vision of our mission. Not infrequently, as I go about and up and down the land, I am asked what my business is, and when I say that I am a teacher of speech, I am greeted with an "Oh," given with a certain inflection that means more than any description can convey. Well did Bob Burdette exclaim: "There is no word in the English language that is capable of so great a variety of expression as the monosyllable "Oh." But when used in this connection, and in answer to my simple and naive statement that I am a teacher of speech, there is no doubt whatever as to what variety of expression is intended. If the "Oh" person does not immediately run away in terror, I am compelled in justice to myself, to use up a lot of his valuable time in explaining that he doesn't know what he is "Oh-ing" about. It is inconvenient, and sometimes I am tempted to answer his question as to my occupation by saying that I am a traveling man, or at least by saying that I am a man traveling. It makes life so much easier.



But it should be said, too, that the "Laska-down-by-the-Rio-Grande" teachers have about disappeared from our schools and colleges. For the most part they now give private lessons only. The rising standards of our school system have about eliminated them from the class-room. And when another generation of men and women grow up from the boys and girls in the schools today, it is more than possible that the sensitive teacher of speech will not feel any hesitation in announcing his profession to the world. He will not have to cover his shame with the respectable mantle of the traveling man. His fellow citizens will know him for what he is, not for what his professional ancestors used to be.

Nor should this somewhat facetious condemnation of the older teaching be taken to mean that all teachers of elocution and expression were ignorant and superficial. That is not so. Many there were who understood what they were about and who had a real and intelligent understanding of their business. What I have said merely means that the unintelligent and superficial teachers were sufficiently numerous and sufficiently noisy to create in the mind of the average citizen the horror with which so many good people have come to regard the business of speech teaching. The very fact that, as a profession, we have had to drop such words as "elocution," "expression" and "oratory," all good words in themselves but made outcasts by their evil associations, is sufficient proof that what I have said about our professional inheritance is only too true.

#### **What Does "Speech Education" Mean?**

What, then, does speech education mean in 1926? I think I may say without apology that it stands for a training that is second to none in fitting the boys and girls of today to take their places tomorrow as better men and women, better home-makers, better business men, better professional people, better citizens, than those of past and present generations have been and are. May I be more specific, and say just how speech education is contributing to this consummation so devoutly to be wished.

I purposely omit from our present discussion the recently developed work in speech correction, because it is apart from the work of contests in speaking. But it should be remembered that research and teaching in the treatment of stammering and other speech defects is a vital part of the present program of speech education.

First, then, speech education aims to give boys and girls better English, or, as I prefer to put it, better American speech. By this I mean better pronunciation, clearer enunciation, better choice of words, better grammatical construction, better oral composition in ordinary conversation. I mean the whole program of better speech. And better speech is not stilted speech. It is not ponderous speech. It is not stiffly formal speech. I define good speech as that which conveys the speaker's ideas to the listener in a clear, concise, accurate, effective and pleasing manner. I do not conceive that this includes rigid adherence to any arbitrary standard. I believe that the speech of Texas and of California may well differ, within reasonable limits, from the speech of New York City. I think there is something to be said

for variety among sections of a country as large as this. Of course, when the speech of any section gets so far away from the general speech of the nation as to make it difficult of understanding, then we may be said to have provincialism and we need to check ourselves. To those who hold up England as a model for us, it should be said that English provincialisms are far more numerous than ours, and far worse. It may be argued that it is hard to draw a reasonable line between provincialism and pardonable sectional differences. The answer is that it is *usually* hard to draw "reasonable" lines anywhere, but that it is worth the effort to try. But I am not half so much concerned with this problem of adherence to standards as I am about the necessity of curing lip-laziness, mumbling, obvious misuse of words, obvious mispronunciation and inaccurate and barbarous speech. Our problem with these things is enough to keep us busy. We need not worry much if our western speech differs from that of our brethren in the east, so long as the differences do not spell laziness, slovenliness and carelessness in the use of language. The first aim of speech education, then, is to train our boys and girls in better conversational speech. If we differ, in minor points, as to what better speech is, we shall not differ as to the factors enumerated above, the important factors in better speech.

Second, in addition to better conversational speech, speech education aims to give our boys and girls *effective public speech*. Use of good American speech in conversation does not guarantee excellence in public address, public reading and amateur acting. Properly to equip those who have some degree of native talent for public speaking, public reading and amateur acting is a problem that carries us into a field beyond that of good speech for conversational purposes. But it is a vital part of our program. We want our boys and girls to be public minded. We want them to contribute their best to the community. We want our future doctors and lawyers to educate us in health and in community peace as well as to cure our dire diseases and carry us through law-suits. We want our merchants and our mechanics to enlighten us on how to buy and how to take care of our cars as well as to take our money for the car and repair the carburetor when it begins to sneeze. We want those with talent to contribute to the aesthetic life of the community through dramatic and literary activity. The second aim of speech education, then, is to prepare boys and girls to take their places socially and to contribute their best to the community, through increased facility in public speaking, reading and dramatics.

Third, speech educators have come to realize that good speech and participation in community work are not superficial things to be accomplished by a few superficial instructions in the use of voice, articulating organs and movements of the hands. Speech is a form of reaction to environment, as the biologist would say. That reaction will be good or bad, not merely as voice and gestures are good or bad, but as the whole physical and mental being is good or bad. No amount of training in gesture and pantomime will take the place of information, thinking and judgment. No amount of voice culture will atone for lack of aesthetic appreciation of good literature. In a word, no amount of surface can take the place of depth. There

may be enough water in a river to float a steamboat, but if the water is spread out so that it is only three feet deep, no boat of any size can navigate it. The figure halts somewhat. Take another. No matter how beautiful the skin of the apple, if the apple is green it will generate a pain at the equator, and if it is wormy it is not fit to eat. No matter how good the speech, voice and gesture, if there is nothing to express, or, if what is there is green or wormy, we labor in vain. Hence the modesty of the modern speech teacher includes a self-assumed obligation to help the student to more complete information, logical and sound thinking, deep appreciation and educated tastes. The teacher does not forget that the boy and girl learn these things in other classes. But he remembers that much of what is learned is isolated material, too often not brought into close integration with past knowledge and experience unless, through an effort to use it, the student works the material over and moulds it for expression. And so the wise teacher of speech goes below the surface and tries to see to it that the student has adequate preparation for public speech, that he hunts up and correlates the facts, that he matures his judgments and that he checks himself up with the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the race. This is a big program, and the wise teacher enlists the help of his fellow teachers in other fields to give to his students the best that education affords.

To make this contribution, the teacher of speech should be, not the poorest, but the best educated teacher on the staff. I happen to be head of a school that trains for teaching as well as for platform and stage. No student gets through our school without at least one year of laboratory science, two years of foreign language, one semester of psychology, one year or more of English, some sociology, history, economics, etc. For every hour of speech instruction he receives, he must take two hours of subjects other than speech. And beginning next year, all of our graduates who expect to teach will be required to take a fifth year beyond the year required for the degree, Bachelor of Science in Speech. That is what I think of the necessity of thorough academic grounding for those who would practice the speech arts or those who would teach others to do so. This does not mean that education comes only through the classroom. Many well educated people have never been to college. But we mean to make sure that all who go out with our stamp on them have gone through the process of general cultural education. The third aim of speech education, then, is to make sure of solid substance and educated taste for the beautiful and effective speech form.

#### **Speech Teachers Must Train for Leadership**

A fourth aim of speech education is to develop leaders in community, state and national life. A distinguished educator used to define education as "the process of turning out people who have to be reckoned with." Now we want our students to be educated in that sense. My ambition for every student under my charge is that, when anything is started in his community, those who start it will have to consult him before going ahead. I do not, of course, mean that our boys and girls are to become obstructionists or quar-

relsome individuals. Not at all. I mean that our boys and girls should be in such positions of leadership in the communities to which they go, should be so indispensable to the life of those communities, that it would never occur to anyone to start a new movement without first enlisting their aid and support. Their speech education should help them to attain to such positions. As educated men and women, they have a community obligation. That obligation is to foster and further every legitimate enterprise, and to start new ones. By training in convincing, persuasive speech, our students should acquire that positiveness, that personal aggressiveness, that outstanding "punch," if you please, that will stamp them as men and women who are not afraid to sponsor movements that make for civic welfare and to fight publicly those things that tear down community life. They should be leaders in the organizations to which they belong, whether those organizations be churches, lodges, schools, clubs or what not. Our fourth aim, then, is to make our students leaders, aggressive and unafraid.

Now someone will say that the last two aims listed above are the aims of all education. Precisely. Adopting them puts the speech teacher shoulder to shoulder with his brothers and sisters in the great educational movement. But speech education is fitted, by virtue of its very nature, to make a contribution that no other subject in the curriculum of the school can make. No teacher comes so close to the personality of the student as does the speech teacher. In other classes he recites facts, laws and explanations. In the speech class he gives out a part of himself. His recitation in speech is his own reaction to what he has learned, whether it be in dramatics, reading or speaking. And it follows that no other teacher has the opportunities for personal influence that come to the teacher of speech. The speech teacher deals, not primarily with subject matter of books, but with human personality. I know of no case of people whose opportunities for educating boys and girls are equal to those of the speech teacher.

If this very inadequate and rather general statement of the aims of speech education and of the opportunities open to the teacher of speech has made sufficiently plain the possibilities and potentialities before us, let us turn to the original question, the relation of speech contests to speech education. How can the contest aid in accomplishing our ends?

There are two ways of looking at contests. The first sees in speech contests merely a chance to win victories. There are superintendents and principals of schools who look upon contests as ways whereby their schools may outshine other schools. Usually this means ways by which the particular superintendent or principal may outshine other superintendents and principals, by being the head of a winning school. There are contest coaches who see in the contests merely the means of their own glorification. And of course there are boys and girls who believe that the only merit in a contest is that it gives them and their school a chance for glory. Such school heads, teachers and students frequently regard almost anything as fair so long as it leads to victory. They will pick "friendly" judges. They will "manufacture" evidence in debate. They will have the local lawyer write the

speeches. They will take every mean advantage. They will quibble over technical points. They will allow only star debaters and speakers to represent the school, thus keeping all others from the benefits of participation. School heads will discharge a teacher who does not "bring home the bacon." So long as victory is the only angle from which a contest is viewed, just so long will these things be.

### **The Broader View of Contests**

There is, fortunately, another and broader view of contests. This view sees the contest as a means of putting life and motive into education. Recognizing that we all work better if we have a definite goal to work for, those who hold this point of view use the contests to motivate the work of better conversational speech, effective public speech, and adequate preparation for leadership. The teacher who sees the contest in this light goes in to win and urges the student to go in to win, but he knows that there is something infinitely more important than winning, and that this thing is education. He does not lose sight of the primary motive in the contest, but rather uses the incentive to win to stimulate his students to the very limit of their effort. He instills the spirit of sportsmanship into the contestants, and so animates their work of preparation that they forget the "tricks of the trade" and extend themselves to win by sheer merit. He shows them that a good name is rather to be chosen than many victories, and teaches them that if they will work hard and conscientiously they will win their fair share of the decisions. Such a teacher will try to see to it that his contestants are not imposed upon by those who hold lower ideals of contests than his own, but he will not under any circumstances take an unfair advantage for himself or his contestants.

I am not so optimistic about judgeless contests as are some. I think I know all the arguments in their favor. I have seen them tried and I have tried them. But we have to deal with boys and girls, not with academic angels. Human nature is strong, and the fact remains that a decision stimulates students to greater efforts than they will put forth where there is no decision. I prefer to hold on to that which has been proved good, trusting that as time goes on we shall gradually eliminate the abuses of the judged contest. I know that these abuses can be eliminated where they exist, because I have seen them eliminated where they have existed. Both in university and in high school contests, I have seen the spirit of rivalry cleanse itself of crookedness and take on the shape of healthy competition on a high plane. There is not the least doubt in my mind as to the trend in the last fifteen years. As contest director at the University of Michigan for several years, and as founder and manager of the Michigan High School Debating League, I have seen the trend at close range. I know that there are still abuses. I would be very skeptical of any assurance by anyone here that no shady practices exist in Texas. But I am quite willing to leave it to the officials of the League under whose auspices we are met here today, as to whether or not contests are on the up-grade. I know what the answer will be.

The relation of speech contests to speech education, then, is the relation of encouragement to achievement, or motivation to endeavor, almost the relation of gas to the automobile or oats to the horse. They make the work of speech education go. They generate the group spirit, the enthusiasm, the morale, so necessary to the highest type of work.

Some years ago, while visiting a school in the upper peninsula of Michigan, I noticed in the machine-shop of the school, where high school students worked in iron, two bits of machinery evidently made from the same pattern. One of them was poorly done. Even the eye of a layman could see the crudity of the work. The other was apparently perfect. I could not help but admire it. I said to the superintendent who was with me, "I suppose these two pieces represent two stages of practice, the one being the work of beginners, the other the work of those who acquired skill." I was astounded at his answer. "No," said he, "the difference is not a difference of practice, it is a difference of motivation. One piece, the poor one, was made as a class exercise merely. The other, the perfect one, was made with the knowledge that it was to fit into an engine used in one of our iron mines. Knowing that it was to be used, the boys used care in making it. Knowing that the other was merely an exercise, they were careless." It occurred to me that right there was epitomized the whole story of motivation. You see it in classes in composition. If a theme is to be printed, it will be prepared with infinitely more care than if it is to be read and returned only. Even you teachers will write better for the newspaper than you will for the wastebasket.

### **The Special Value of the Contest**

Now the special value of the contest is that it makes a place where a speech is to be used. It stimulates good work. I have taught public speaking for the better part of twenty years, and I have worked with debating teams the greater part of my teaching experience, and I have never yet had the results in class that I have had in debates, even though the class work was given credit and the debate work was not. There is something about a contest that brings out the best that is in boys and girls, and if the teacher and the school head have the interests of the boys and girls at heart and think of them more than of merely winning, the value of the contests can hardly be overestimated. The most striking testimony I have ever heard on the different values of a college education has been given by old varsity debaters, some of them now gray headed and sitting on the bench or practicing at the bar. This testimony is that the experience gained in varsity debates was the greatest single thing that they got out of their university life. And they mean it. They got a training there that was impossible to get anywhere else. The reason is that here they were given strong motivation for their work, and in consequence they did their work, not only better than they did it elsewhere, but also willingly, gladly, enthusiastically. And every educator knows that it is only when work is done with enthusiasm and whole-heartedness that the highest results are achieved. It is the glory of contest work that it furnishes the inspiration so vital to real education.

Still, motivation is not the only justification for the contest. There is another, equally good. It is that the contest brings the student into the direct road that he should later follow in his life as a public-minded citizen. Much, perhaps too much, of the work of the schools is "general preparation for life." We study Latin to get a general acquaintance with life through a study of a particular language of a particular people, or we study it to acquire general habits of study and application, or we study it to absorb a better general understanding of English. There is little in the study of Latin that is more than a general preparation. I ought to know: I studied it for six years. The same is true of history and science and mathematics, for the most part. I do not mean to criticize these subjects. A general background for life is very necessary. But it is good to have, along with the general preparation, some kinds of specific preparation for life. And one specific preparation the contest in public speaking is able to give. In order to make clear what I mean, let me analyze the situation into which the public speaker is to thrust himself.

We find ourselves in a constantly changing world. Nothing is static. All is change. Earnest-minded people, the world over, are constantly trying to make over our social fabric so that it will serve us better. And selfish-minded people are always trying to make it over to suit their own selfish purposes, "the public is damned." In other words, in our churches, in our schools, in our lodges, in our legislatures, new plans are constantly coming to the front to be acted upon. It is unfortunate, perhaps, but it is only too bitterly true, that we do not possess infinite wisdom with which to solve our social problems. We have to "muddle along" as best we can with the wisdom we have. But our chief difficulty is not that we do not have infinite wisdom but that we do not use even the poor wisdom that we have. We are Republicans if we live in California or we are Democrats if we live in Texas. We are fundamentalists or we are liberals. And on this foolish basis we cast our votes and settle our involved social problems. We do not draw on the store of knowledge that we possess, perhaps, because it is too much work, perhaps because we have not ceased to be bigoted and prejudiced in our outlook. But we all agree that this state of affairs is not the ideal one. We all agree that social problems should be settled only in the light of all the knowledge and wisdom that we possess.

#### **Forces Study of Both Sides of Questions**

Now it happens that speaking contests make a very direct contribution to this better way of settling public questions. Consider the contest in debate, one of the most valuable contests we have. The first thing that the debater learns is that he must know everything about the question that his time and resources will permit. And not about one side of the question only. He must investigate both sides. He must be familiar with what has been written by men and women who have studied it deeply. He must study the facts involved. He learns at once that it is of no use to assert "it is" or "it isn't." He learns to beware, not only of his own prejudices and the blindness that they may cause, but of the prejudices of others whose



evidence he uses. He learns the value of unprejudiced authorities and unbiased collections of statistics. He learns that he must be rational in his attitude towards all public questions. It is not too much to say that several thousand future citizens of the great State of Texas have a more rational understanding of the question of child labor and a much better idea of the way to settle that question than would have been the case had they not debated the question under the auspices of this League last year.

That is what I mean by specific preparation for life through the contests. These boys and girls get a definite idea of the way to approach and solve the great questions that confront them as citizens. They are getting here not only general information but they are learning by actual practice a better way of dealing with their problems than they have known before. They are learning to lay aside their personal prejudices and their party and social alliances, which are at best a doubtful asset in the intelligent approach to a new problem, and to come to the work of social betterment in a thoroughly rational way. *They must think themselves clear* if they would be successful debaters.

Now I know, all too well, the criticisms that are levelled at the debate as a contest. "Some must always support the wrong side." "Why can't we leave off wrangling and settle public questions as we settle scientific questions, by scientific study and impartial decision?" "Students have to speak against their convictions." And a host of other criticisms.

Some of our critics are merely unconsciously jealous of those who happen to have powers of public address superior to their own. It is always a temptation to discount those activities in which we have little proficiency. Life is too short to quarrel with the critics of this class.

Still others of the critics, however, deserve serious answer. Their trouble lies in the fact that they have not fully comprehended the task of the debater, and in the further fact that they are not clear as to the nature of the problem which the debater faces. To these I would venture to make respectful answer in the few minutes that are left.

### **No "Right" or "Wrong" Side to Debate**

First, there is no "right" or "wrong" side to a debate question. "Right and wrong" questions are not debatable and are not debated. No debating team that you ever heard argued the question "Resolved, That a Judge Should Not Take a Bribe," or the question "Resolved, That Stealing Is Reprehensible." These are "right and wrong" questions, and are not debatable. We all agree. Such questions do not constitute social questions that have to be settled. They are settled already. We may have to devise ways to prevent judges from taking bribes and to prevent people from stealing, and there might be a debate on the best way to do these things, but that is quite another matter. The questions we debate are questions of *social policy*. *What is the wisest way of dealing with a given situation?* And as to questions of social policy, there are usually at least two opposing views, sometimes more. These are questions on which people may and do differ, in all honesty. I may think that we ought to join the League of



Nations. You may not think so. It is not a question of right and wrong; it is a question of wise policy, to be determined by the proper use of all our reasoning faculties. There is, in the light of this, no weight to the criticism that "some must take the wrong side." There is no wrong side to a debatable question. And there is no right side.

Second, social questions are not like scientific questions. The difference is that a scientific question can await the outcome of long study; a social question has to be acted upon when it is raised. I can delay my answer to the question "Is tobacco harmful to adult women?" till the facts can be studied exhaustively. But when the Philippine people ask for independence, we have to act on that question at once, whether we will or not. If we do not act, we answer their request in the negative, quite as effectively as though we had voted NO. It is true, we can later vote YES, but in the meantime we have really voted NO by refusing to vote at all. They are denied independence. And we have to act on our social questions without full knowledge of what the action may involve. Indeed we can never know the full implication of our acts. Still we must act. Every election is more or less a leap in the dark, as it were.

But we can make the leap *less* in the dark, rather than *more*. And we can do this by the method employed by the debater: study both sides of the question, learn everything possible about it, turn it over in every light that we can get on it, have some bring forward all possible reasons for it and have others bring forward all possible reasons against it, and then decide to do one thing or another in the light of what we have learned, always remembering that we have incomplete knowledge but that what we have is of great importance. Now this is just what a debate does: it uncovers the most important facts, just as a lawsuit does in court, and it does it by having a "prosecution" and a "defense." It is not a perfect system, either in court or in legislature, but it is the best we have been able to evolve, human nature being what it is. It is the very foundation stone of democratic government. The answer to our scientific critic, then, is this: The debater uses all available knowledge, and he even tries to discover new facts, but he is under the necessity of *acting*, and in order to act as wisely as possible he turns on all the light there is and decides social questions as wisely as is humanly possible in view of the fact that the solution, at least the temporary solution, cannot be put off. Scientific study is not barred. Far from it. Let us have all the scientific knowledge possible. But—with little knowledge or much, we must act.

And even a very full knowledge does not furnish the solution. The solution can come, if at all, only through experience, not through advance information. We have been studying the question of the tariff for a century, and the tariff is still a debatable question. We have acted on it many times, and we are still divided as to the wisest action. Perhaps we shall never know the answer to the tariff question, but we can't escape action on it for all that. Our concern must not be for perfect knowledge and wisdom; these

are impossible. But for the best knowledge and the best wisdom we can get. And the debate helps to give us this. By this function it justifies itself.

### **How About Arguing Against Your Convictions?**

Third, how about the criticism that debaters have to speak against their convictions? I am not at all sure that there is anything so very sacred in a debater's "convictions" on a debatable question. I am not at all sure that it would not be a good thing to ask every student to speak on the side opposite to that in which he believes. It might give him a better understanding of public questions. It might help him to see that there is much to be said on the other side, and thus it might make him more tolerant of the beliefs of others. We are all too blind to the other fellow's point of view. And since debate questions are not questions of right and wrong, perhaps it might be a wise thing to ask every debater to debate occasionally on the side of those who do not believe as he does. But I have not pressed this half-conviction of mine with my debaters. I cannot remember, in many years of work with debating teams, that I ever asked a student to debate against his convictions. In tryouts, there are always those who favor the question. There are always those who oppose it. I have always found it possible to make up my teams in accordance with the natural alignment of debaters on the question. I know of dozens of other teachers who testify to the same experience. And I do not remember ever to have talked with a debate teacher who found it otherwise.

In addition to this, I may say also that it has been a common experience with me to have debaters come to me after the debate and say that, after studying the question thoroughly, they were inclined to believe that the opposite side had the better of the argument, and that they had changed their minds on the question. I mention this to show that a debate does not, as some think, merely strengthen a student in his original convictions and prejudices. Quite as often, the debate shows him the weakness of his original position. If he comes out of the study and debate with the same conviction as when he entered, at least his conviction is more intelligent than before.

Most criticisms, it seems to me, are the result of incomplete understanding of the debaters' function. If debating is wrong, then it is wrong to seek light on social questions before acting on them. If debating is wrong, then it is right to act on prejudice and without information. If debaters have not always acted as bearers of light to the solution of public questions, then the debate has not been properly conducted. Winning the debate has taken the place of education. The remedy is not to abolish the debate but to readjust a bad emphasis. The doctor does not cure a sick patient by killing him; he seeks to heal his malady and make him well. If our debaters are still in poor health in places, let us not kill the debate but try to cure the disease. Personally I believe that debates are much better than they used to be, and that, in general, they are in pretty fair health today.

To conclude, speaking contests motivate speech education, which is to say education for citizenship. And they make possible specific education for

meeting the problems of life by showing the student how to approach these problems and how to act on them intelligently. They foster intelligent study and the formation of intelligent opinion. They inculcate honesty, courtesy, good sportsmanship in victory and in defeat, and they make for broad-mindedness and tolerance in personal relations. They help substitute reason for prejudice and they contribute to a better social order.

Speaking contests in this country are only about thirty-five years old. It is a far cry from the first inter-university debate between Harvard and Yale in 1892 to the Texas Interscholastic League with a membership of over four thousand schools. But the rapid advance of contests in speech shows something of what educators think of this work. And their faith is not misplaced. Texas should be proud to have the largest and best organized system of interscholastic contests in the world. When I organized the Michigan High School Debating League in 1917, I sent for and received your literature, and I builded upon your experience. And I say, not to flatter you, but because I believe it to be the modest truth, that there is not an educational agency in the State of Texas today with more potentialities for real education in the field of good citizenship than this Interscholastic League. Your motto, as expressed in your constitution, "interscholastic competitions as an aid in preparation for citizenship," is not an idle boast or an **exag-**gerated claim. It is a very modest statement of your position. And the coming generations of citizens in this Stat~~y~~ will be better and broader and more intelligent and more effective becaus~~y~~ of your existence.

Long may you prosper!