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A Study of the Relevance of Debate
Through a Comparison of Propositions
with Congressional Deliberation

Janine Seymorski Holloman
Honors Senior Paper
Introduction

This paper actually began with a Spring semester, 1973, independent study project. The project was to compile a record of intercollegiate debate at Western for each academic year from 1921 to 1974. That record included three items:

1) the intercollegiate debate proposition
2) the names of the debate squad
3) a list of the debates and/or debate tournaments participated in. When the data was available, the names of the colleges the teams debated and and whether the debate was won by Western was included.

The research involved examining the files of four former debate coaches and comparing those records with debate write ups in the Brown and Gold yearbooks.

Participation in the intercollegiate debate program during 1973-74, and participation as a judge of high school debates has served to broaden the writer's knowledge of debate.

The topic for this paper stems from the writer's debate experience and the implications a proposition as relevant as this year's proposition dealing with the energy crisis has for the debater. Events unfold daily that require debaters to keep themselves well informed in the area of the debate proposition, as new developments are continuously brought to public attention.

With that thought, the idea developed to examine the other propositions and test their relevance to national decision making in the topic area of the proposition.
Historical Perspective of Debate

Debating can be traced to preclassical times. Three scenes in the works of Homer center on what could be called debates, including a scene in the Iliad depicting an argument between Achilles and Agamemnon before a council of Greek leaders. Protagoras of Abdera (c. 481 - c. 411 B.C.) is sometimes referred to as the "father of debate" because he trained his students to argue on both sides of an issue. During the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. debate on important issues was a central process in Greek governmental assemblies and courts of law.

This tradition was continued in Rome. Leading public figures debated in law courts, the Senate, and the assembly. The education of youths included argumentative exercises which were sets of speeches supporting opposite sides of fictitious cases.

The scholars of the medieval Catholic Church engaged in public debates on philosophical theological questions, such as the nature of being. A form of debating called disputation, the defense of a thesis by formal logic, was an important part of education in the universities of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Modern Legislative Debating

The rise of congressional government furthered the Greek idea of legislative debating, with the legislatures of Great Britain and the United States proving to be modern examples. In the United States Congress, Senate debates are considered more significant than those of the House of Representatives. In the House, there is a shorter time allowed for debate than in the Senate, where a simple majority vote can limit talk and force action.
In contrast, there is almost unlimited debate possible in the Senate, although a limit can be imposed by a two-thirds vote. A special action in the Senate, called the filibuster, may be taken in which debate may be extended several days.

Great Senate debates include the Webster-Hayne debate of 1830, the Webster-Calhoun debate of 1833, and the debates over the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska bill of 1854.

During the 19th century, debating was popular during election campaigns. The Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858 took the candidates into seven Illinois towns. The same year "Parson" William G. Brownlow, a Methodist minister and editor from Tennessee who became a U.S. Senator and governor of Tennessee, and Abraham Pryne, a Congregationalist minister and abolitionist editor, publicly debated in Philadelphia on the question, "Ought Slavery to be Perpetuated?"


Although the debater of today may or may not be the Kennedy or Webster of tomorrow, the fact remains that college debaters across the nation are involved in an activity that brings important issues to the public. In their own environments, debaters prove themselves to be leaders in their educational endeavors. Being articulate individuals, debaters express themselves and share knowledge in classroom situations and become influential members of society, as they become well read and knowledgeable citizens.
Significance

"Resolved; that the federal government should..."

The majority of debate propositions in the 53 years involved in this study involve federal policy, and in the six words beginning these propositions lie the significance of a study of this kind.

With only a few exceptions, every debate proposition from 1922 to 1974 calls for federal legislative action on a national or international issue, from federal operation of coal mines to the control of energy in the United States.

With this obvious emphasis on federal action, the question then arises as to the relevance of the debate program if no federal action or legislative argumentation on the debate proposition is taken.

It is on this rationale that the following project is founded.
Rational decision making on an important issue involves research on the issue to be resolved, critical analysis of the information gathered, and finally, reaching a decision based on the data collected and the individual's reasoning and analysis of the information brought to his attention.

But this process is not unique to the individual. Our political system is predicated on a citizenry capable of making rational decisions. Some decisions, such as local referendums and state issues, are determined directly by the citizenry through elections, while we decide many national and international issues through our representatives in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. However, the decision making process for both citizen and representative is the same: research, critical analysis, and coming to a decision. It is by this process that we as Americans decide our disposition on a national issue before us. It is then our responsibility to convey our decision to our representatives, who in turn represent our views in their respective houses of Congress where the decision making process begins again.

Whether one is participating in or attending a debate, it is an ideal way for citizens to inform themselves of vital issues affecting this country. Debating involves the core concepts of rational decision making. Here the affirmative and negative teams exchange vital information, and using critical analysis, they clearly establish valid reasons based on evidence for both the adoption and rejection of the proposition.

But what if these issues were not prominent or significant enough to be brought to the attention of the Congress. Might it be possible to say that intercollegiate debate on Congressionally unimportant subjects on which no legislative action is taken diminishes the significance of the debate program, especially when colleges throughout the country debate the same proposition.
Therefore, the question of the paper is; given the debate proposition for a given year, and also given all congressional action, legislation as well as argumentation, for the same year, what is the relationship between the debate proposition and congressional action on that proposition.
Procedure

To test the salience of the debate proposition in the 53 years of competition, a file was compiled containing the propositions for each year from the records of former debate coaches and issues of the Brown and Gold yearbooks. It should be noted here that before the 1938-1939 debate season, different propositions were used for men and women, and that different regional tournaments used different propositions. After that time, one national debate proposition was chosen for use by all colleges.

Two sources were used for research of congressional action. From 1922 to 1950, findings are taken from the indexes of the Congressional Record. After 1950, a much more concise publication, the Congressional Index, was used. For this reason, in the years between 1922 and 1950 the dates of the bills are only in terms of the congressional session, while from 1950 to the present, exact dates are available for the introduction of legislation. However, in both sources, complete action is listed, including executive orders. Where an executive order became a House or Senate bill relating to the proposition, the congressional bill number was used. Therefore, where no action was found, it includes not only congressional action but executive action also.

A three year time span was arbitrarily chosen to determine whether action was taken on the proposition.

A table of compiled data follows the research findings.
1921 - 1922

Proposition: Resolved; that the principle of the closed shop should be maintained in American industry.

No Congressional action was taken in the three year period.

1922 - 1923

Men: Resolved; that the allied debt due to us from the allies during the world war should be cancelled.

During the 67th Congress, 4th Session, December 4, 1922 - February 7, 1923, several resolutions in both houses were introduced, such as House Resolution 232, calling for cancellation and Senate Bill 149 calling for collection of the debt.

Women: Resolved; that the United States government should own and operate coal mines.

During the 67th Congress, 4th Session, December 4, 1922 - February 7, 1923, Senate Bill 4407 was debated, authorizing the President to take over and operate coal mines in case of emergencies.

1923 - 1924

Men: Resolved; that Congress should enact legislation embodying the essential features of the Huber Unemployment Insurance Bill of Wisconsin constitutionally.

Several unemployment bills were under consideration at this time, although none were designated as the Huber Bill.

Women #1: Resolved; that the United States should join the League of Nations.

Women #2: Resolved; that the United States should enter the World Court.

During the 69th Congress, 1st Session, March 25-July 26, 1926, Senate Resolution 253 was a request to withhold action looking into entry into the League of Nations and the World Court, in response to the World Court Bill of that session.
1924 - 1925

Men: Resolved; that Congress should be empowered to override by a 2/3 vote, decisions of the Supreme Court which declare acts of Congress unconstitutional.
No Congressional action was taken in the three year span.

Women: Resolved; that the Japanese Exclusion Act be repealed

House Bill 16508 was introduced in the 69th Congress, 2nd Session, December 6, 1926 - March 4, 1927, to amend and appeal certain sections of the Immigration Laws of 1917 and 1924. It was the Immigration Law of 1924 that contained the Japanese Exclusion Act.

1925 - 1926

Men's League: Resolved; that the United States should recognize the present government of Russia.

In the 69th Congress, 1st Session, March 25, 1925 - July 26, 1926, joint resolutions in both houses, H.R. 84 and S.R. 74, called for the recognition of Soviet Russia.

Men's Tri State: Resolved; that the Constitution of the United States should be amended to give Congress to regulate child labor.

Congress passed the first Child Labor Act in 1924 but it was defeated in the states and never ratified. It was again introduced in the 69th Congress, 1st Session, March 25, 1925 - July 26, 1926 as House Bill 173.

Women: Resolved; that the proposed Child Labor Amendment be adopted.

See Men's Tri State proposition.

1926 - 1927

Men's #1: Resolved; that this house endorses the governmental principles of Mussolini.

There were several remarks in the Senate and House relative to Mussolini but no action was taken either condemning or endorsing his principles of government.
Men's #2: Resolved; that the essential features of the McNary-Haigan Farm Relief Bill be enacted.

Debate on this proposition began in the 69th Congress, 1st Session, March 25, 1925 - July 26, 1926 and continued through the 2nd Session, December 6, 1926 - March 4, 1927

Women: Resolved; that the United States should adopt a uniform marriage and divorce law.

Senate Bill 1754 called for uniform marriage and divorce laws in the 69th Congress, 2nd Session, December 6, 1926 - March 4, 1927. It was passed in that session but vetoed by the President.

1927 - 1928

Men's #1: Resolved; that our Latin American policy be condemned.

In the 69th Congress, 2nd Session, December 6, 1926 - March 4, 1927, Senate Resolution 366 set up an investigation of relations of the United States with Mexico and Central American countries.

Men's #2: Resolved; that the United States should cease to protect by armed force, capital invested abroad, except after formal declaration of war.

In the 70th Congress, 1st Session, December 5, 1927 - May 29, 1928, Senate Resolution 100 opposed any policy of the United States which would guarantee or protect by force investments of its citizens to foreign countries.

Women: Resolved; that in time of war, the United States should conscript wealth and profits sufficient to pay current expenses of the war.

House Joint Resolutions 19 and 323 called for an amendment to the Constitution providing for conscription of persons and property in event of declaration of war in the 70th Congress, 1st Session, December 5, 1927-May 29, 1928
1928 - 1929

Men's League: Resolved; that the present jury system be abolished.

Mid West Tournament: Resolved that the public should retain possession of and develop the principal sources of hydro electric power in the United States.

No Congressional action was taken in the three year span for either proposition.

Women: Resolved; that it is desirable that the practice of installment buying be drastically curtailed.

There was no action in Congress on this proposition.

1929 - 1930

Men's #1: Resolved; that the United States, without awaiting international action, should immediately inaugurate a program of national disarmament.

This proposition was debated at the time of the Naval Disarmament Conference in London, at which time disarmament was debated in both houses.

Men's #2: Resolved; that the League of Nations should adopt a plan of complete disarmament excepting such forces as are needed for police purposes.

This was also debated at the time of the London Conference. However, there was no direct reference in Congress to the League of Nations accepting the responsibility for disarmament.

Women's #1: Resolved; that the chain store is detrimental to public welfare.

In the 71st Congress, 2nd Session, December 2, 1929 - July 3, 1930, several comments were made concerning chain stores and House Bill 10122 called for the regulation of chain stores.

Women's #2: Resolved; that all countries adopt a plan of complete disarmament.

See men's proposition #1.
1930 - 1931

Men: Resolved; that the several states should enact legislation providing for compulsory unemployment insurance to which the employers shall contribute.

Senate Bill 7271 was the appointment in the Senate of a select committee to investigate an unemployment insurance system. Also, several comments and resolutions were introduced. The Senate Bill passed in the 71st Congress, 3rd Session, December 1, 1930 - March 4, 1931.

Women: Resolved; that state medicine be established.

No Congressional action was taken in the three year span.

1931 - 1932

Men's League: Resolved; that a substitute for the capitalistic system be adopted in the United States.

No Congressional action was taken on this proposition.

Pi Kappa Delta: Resolved; that Congress should enact legislation providing for the centralized control of industry.

The only action found on this proposition was in the 72nd Congress, 2nd Session, December 5, 1932 - March 4, 1933. It consisted of remarks in the House relative to control of industrial production.

Mid West: Resolved; that the United States should enact legislation embodying the essential features of the Stuart Chase plan for the stabilization of business.

Several proposals were found for assisting business but none were designated as the Stuart Chase plan.

Women's #1: Resolved; that the United States should offer to participate in the cancellation of all intergovernmental world war debts, including reparations.

In the 72nd Congress, 2nd Session, December 5, 1932 - March 4, 1933, several bills and resolutions were presented in both houses on the proposition.
Women's #2: Resolved; that Capitalism as a system of economic organization is unsound.

No action was found on this proposition.

Women's #3: Resolved; that Great Britian should immediately grant complete independence to India.

No action was found either in support or disapproval of Great Britian's policy toward independence of India.

1932 - 1933

Men's League: Resolved; that the general property tax in Michigan for state and local purposes should be substantially replaced by other forms of taxation.

West Conference: Resolved; that at least 50% of all revenue for state and local purposes should be derived from other sources other than tangible property.

In the Michigan House of Representatives in 1933, Bill 626 was debated. It was proposed to amend Public Act 206 for the reduction of the levy of property tax. Public Act 206 set up the property tax system. This bill corresponds to a Senate Bill on the same subject.

Women: Resolved; that members of the lower house of Congress and the state legislature be elected by and in proportion to membership in occupational groups.

No action was found on this proposition.

1933 - 1934

Men: Resolved; that the powers of the President of the United States be substantially increased as a settled policy.

In the 73rd Congress, 1st Session, March 4-April 24, 1933, there were remarks in the House relative to increase of Presidential powers. But in the 2nd Session, January 3-February 9, 1934, A Senate Joint Resolution was passes as an amendment regarding Presidential veto of items in appropriation bills
Women: Resolved; that the federal government should grant substantial aid to public, elementary, and secondary education as a settled policy.

Senate Bill 501 in the 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, January 3-February 9, 1934, was proposed to provide certain loans to aid, support, and maintain public schools in the United States.

1934 - 1935

Men's League: Resolved; that the manufacture of arms and munitions in the United States should be made a monopoly of the federal government.

In the 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, January 3 - February 9, 1934, Senate Bill 6896 set up a Senate investigation of the manufacture and sale of munitions. House Joint Resolution 347 called for the prohibition of sales of arms and munitions.

Pi Kappa Delta: Resolved; that all nations should agree to prevent the international shipment of arms and munitions.

It was at this time that the Treaty for Subversion of International Trade in Arms came to Congress for debate and ratification.

Women's #1: Resolved; that the general welfare of the people is best promoted by democratic democracy.

Women's #2: Resolved; that a policy of development toward collectivism be permanently adopted by the United States.

No Congressional action took place on either proposition.

1935 - 1936

Men: Resolved; that all collective bargaining be negotiated through non-company unions safeguarded by law.

The 1937 Taft-Hartly Act prohibited, among other things, the closed shop and collective bargaining.
Women: Resolved; that Congress should be given the power to override by a 2/3 vote, decisions by the Supreme Court declaring acts of Congress unconstitutional.

No action was found on this proposition.

1936 - 1937

Men's #1: Resolved; that the extension of consumer cooperatives would contribute to the public welfare.

In the 74th Congress, 2nd Session, January 3-June 20, 1936, remarks were recorded in both the House and the Senate concerning cooperatives and with regards to tax exemption for them. Action continued into the next session.

Men's #2: Resolved; that Congress should be empowered to fix minimum wages and maximum hours for industry.

In the 74th Congress, 2nd Session, January 3-June 20, 1936, House Joint Resolution 617 and Senate Joint Resolution 587 called for an amendment to the Constitution empowering Congress to regulate hours, wages, and conditions of work. Debate continued into the next session.

Women: Same as Men's #2

1937 - 1938

Men's #1: Resolved; that isolationism is impractical in the modern world.

Action was confined to remarks in the House and Senate pertaining broadly to isolationism.

Men's #2: Resolved; that the National Labor Relations Board should be empowered to enforce arbitration of all industrial disputes.

In the 75th Congress, 1st Session, January 5 - August 21, 1937, House Bill 5276 was a bill to confer power of mediation and conciliation on the Labor Relations Board.
Men's #3: Resolved; that the several Southern states should adopt a unicameral system of legislation.

No action was taken on this proposition.

Women: Same as Men's #2

1938 - 1939

Resolved; that the United States should cease the use of public funds, including credit, for the purpose of stimulating business.

Congressional deliberation concerning the proposition was the call for the repeal of the Economics Act of 1932, which was proposed in the 76th Congress, 1st, Session, January 6 - August 20, 1939. In addition, other action included a House bill that allowed national banks to grant capital loans to small businesses.

1939 - 1940

Resolved; that the United States should follow a policy of strict military and economic isolation toward all countries outside the Western Hemisphere engaged in armed civil or international conflict.

Legislation corresponding closest to the proposition came in the 76th Congress, 2nd Session, November 1 - December 1, 1939, in the form of House Resolution 189, inquiring as to extension of credit to belligerent nations, and Senate Joint Resolution 189 providing for adherence by the United States to a policy of total nonparticipation in foreign wars.

1940 - 1941

Resolved; that the Nations of the Western Hemisphere should enter into a permanent union.

No Congressional action was found in the three year span.
1941 - 1942

Resolved; that the federal government should require by law all labor unions in the United States.

Remarks in the 77th Congress, 4th Session, August 1 - November 2, 1942, regarding Unionism was the only relevant action found on the proposition.

1942 - 1943

Resolved; that the United Nations should establish a permanent federal union.

In the 78th Congress, 1st Session, January 6 - December 21, 1943, an amendment to Senate Resolution 114 was called for to provide for the calling of a meeting of representatives of the United Nations for the purpose of forming an organization.

1943 - 1944

Resolved; that the United States should cooperate in establishing and maintaining an international police force upon the defeat of the axis.

This was also debated in the 78th Congress, 1st Session, in the form of a House and Senate Joint Resolution advising the President to enter agreements to secure and maintain law, order, and peace. Remarks in the House relative to a proposed United Nations police force were also found.

1944 - 1945

Resolved; that the federal government should enact legislation requiring settlement of all labor disputes by compulsory arbitration when voluntary means have failed.

This proposition corresponded with the Labor Disputes Act of 1946, introduced in the 79th Congress, 2nd Session, January 14 - August 2, 1946. An amendment was put on the bill in the Senate to provide additional facilities for mediation of labor disputes and requiring compulsory arbitration.
1945 - 1946

Resolved; that the foreign policy of the United States should be directed towards free trade among the nations of the world.

No action proposing free trade was found in the three year span

1946 - 1947

Resolved; that labor should have a direct share in the management of industry.

No action was found on this proposition.

1947 - 1948

Resolved; that a federal world government should be established.

The World Government was first proposed in 1949, and it was still being debated in 1951. House Resolution 47, January 4, 1951, opposed all plans, programs, and proposals tending toward the development of any form of world government that would limit the rights, privileges, or immunities of United States citizens.

1948 - 1949

Resolved; that the federal government should adopt a policy of equalizing educational opportunities in tax supported schools by means of annual grants.

In the 81st Congress, 1st Session, January 6 - December 3, 1948, Senate Bill 2785 proposed the authorization of loans and grants for construction, remodeling, improvements, and extension of school facilities.

1949 - 1950

Resolved; that the United States should nationalize its basic non agricultural industries.

House Bill 7449 and Senate Bill 2999, April 7, 1951, called for the establishment of authority, seizure, use, and operation by the United States of mines, plants, and industrial facilities in the event of a national emergency due to strikes, lockouts, and stoppages of production.
1950 - 1951

Resolved; that the non Communist nations of the world should form a new international organization.

I found no Congressional action on the Proposition.

1951 - 1952

Resolved; that the federal government should adopt a permanent program of wage and price control.

This was a highly controversial topic. Senate Bill 2073, August 29, 1951; proposed an amendment to the Defense Production Act, that originally set up the controls, to limit the use and power of the act. Senate Bill 1717, June 21, 1951, was a proposal to extend the act. House Bill 2515, February 8, 1951, was a proposal to roll back controls to the June, 1950 level. Debate continued in 1952.

1952 - 1953

Resolved; that the Congress of the United States should enact a compulsory fair employment practice law.

It was not until February 1, 1955, that legislation began on the proposition. It came in the form of Senate Bill 8999 that would prohibit discrimination in employment due to race, color, or creed. In June of that year a watered down version of the bill, House Bill 9629, was proposed.

1953 - 1954

Resolved; that the United States should adopt a policy of free trade.

Unlike the first time the proposition was debated, action in the form of Senate Bill 2164 and House Bill 5877 was introduced, both in June, 1953. Both called for an amendment of certain provisions of the Tariff Act of 1930 and related laws relating to duty rates, marketing, free entry provisions, and exemptions from duties and taxes.
1954 - 1955
Resolved; that the United States should extend diplomatic recognition to the Communist government of China.
No action was found in the three year span.

1955 - 1956
Resolved; that the non agricultural industries should guarantee their employees an annual wage.
The Davis Bacon Act, which was debated in both houses at this time, contained a provision for a guaranteed annual wage.

1956 - 1957
Resolved; that the United States should discontinue direct foreign aid to foreign countries.
No Congressional action relevant to cutting of or increasing foreign aid were found.

1957 - 1958
Resolved; that membership in a labor organization as a condition of employment be illegal.
Congressional action relevant to the proposition was Senate Resolution 13, January 7, 1957, which called for an investigation of the penetration of criminal elements in organized labor in the United States.

1958 - 1959
Resolved; that further development of nuclear weapons should be prohibited by international agreement.
Senate Bill 3173, March 10, 1960, was a proposal to establish an Arms Control Research Institution. Also, House Resolution 9, January 7, 1959, declared the sense of Congress favoring universal disarmament.
1959 - 1960

Resolved; that Congress should have the power to reverse decisions of the Supreme Court.

Although a proposal existed to create a new court, no Congressional action giving Congress reversal power was found.

1960 - 1961

Resolved; that the United States should adopt a program of compulsory health insurance for all citizens.

On February 17, 1961, House Bill 4413 proposed a program of compulsory health insurance. Similar proposals were introduced in following years.

1961 - 1962

Resolved; that labor organizations should be under the jurisdiction of anti trust legislation.

Action corresponding to this proposition was House Bill 203, March 1, 1962, proposed to amend current anti trust laws to prohibit certain activities of labor organizations.

1962 - 1963

Resolved; that the non Communist nations of the world should establish an economic community.

No Congressional action was taken on the proposition.

1963 - 1964

Resolved; that the federal government should guarantee an opportunity for higher education for all high school graduates.

Senate Bill 3060 and House Bill 11585, both in June, 1964, were proposed to amend and extend the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and also provide tax relief for persons incurring expenses for higher education.
1964 - 1965

Resolved; that the federal government should establish a national program of public works for the unemployed.

It was in 1965 that the Public Work and Economic Development Act was debated and passed, providing public sector jobs for people in economically depressed areas, among other things.

1965 - 1966

Resolved; that law enforcement agencies in the United States should be given greater freedom in the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

No Congressional action was taken in the three year span.

1966 - 1967

Resolved; that the United States should substantially reduce its foreign policy commitment.

Several pieces of action were introduced concerning Viet Nam, but no action was taken on overall reduction in the three year span.

1967 - 1968

Resolved; that the federal government should guarantee a minimum annual cash income to all citizens.

No action was taken in the three year period.

1968 - 1969

Resolved; that executive control of the United States foreign policy should be substantially curtailed.

On March 13, 1968, the Senate proposed and amendment to the Constitution relating to the authority of the President to dispach armed forces of the United States outside the United States, the War Powers Act.
1969 - 1970

Resolved; that the federal government should grant annually a specific percentage of its income tax revenue to the state governments.

The Revenue Sharing Act was introduced for debate on September 23, 1969.

1970 - 1971

Resolved; that the federal government should establish a program of wage and price control.


1971 - 1972

Resolved; that greater control should be imposed on the gathering and utilizing of information about United States citizens by government agencies.

Senate Bill 3828, July 21, 1972, was proposed to protect the civil rights of Americans citizens and prevent unwarranted invasion of privacy by prescribing procedures and standards governing disclosure and procurement of information by government agencies.

1972 - 1973

Resolved; that the federal government should provide a program of comprehensive medical care for all United States citizens.

In 1973 two proposals were proposed: Senate Bill 915, the Javits plan, and Senate Bill 1031, the Kennedy proposal.

1973 - 1974

Resolved; that the federal government should control the supply and utilization of energy in the United States.

Several pieces of legislation are pending at this time, including the Emergency Energy Bill.
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* Refer to Appendix I for status of Propositions not meeting the three year criterion.
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Appendix I

Status of Propositions Failing to Meet the Three Year Criterion

1921 - 1922

Resolved; that the principle of the closed shop should be maintained in American industry.

Action on this proposition was first taken in 1933. One of the provisions of the Wagner Act of that year was the improvement of labor standards and unfair employment practices. In addition, the Labor Relations Act of 1935 established the rights of employees to establish unions for collective bargaining.

1924 - 1925 and 1935 - 1936

Resolved; that Congress should be empowered to override by a 2/3 vote, decisions of the Supreme Court which declare acts of Congress unconstitutional.

At no time was Congressional deliberation found on this proposition.

1926 - 1927

Resolved; that this house endorses the governmental principles of Mussolini.

It was not until the onset of World War II that Congress addressed itself to the governmental principles of Mussolini, in the form of remarks in the House and Senate condemning Fascism.

1928 - 1929

Resolved; that the present jury system be abolished.

No Congressional action was ever taken on the proposition.

Resolved; that the public should retain possession of and develop the principal sources of hydro electric power in the United States.

The Tennessee Valley Authority was established in 1933, one year beyond the three year limit.
Resolved; that it is desirable that the practice of installment buying be drastically curtailed.

No Congressional deliberation took place on the proposition.

1929 - 1930

Resolved; that the League of Nations should adopt a plan of complete disarmament excepting such forces as are needed for police purposes.

This proposition never met Congressional deliberation.

1930 - 1931

Resolved, that state medicine be established.

This proposition was debated twice after this, in 1960 - 1961 and 1972-1973. At these later times the proposition was under Congressional consideration.

1931 - 1932

Resolved; that a substitute for the capitalistic system be adopted in the United States.

Resolved; that Capitalism as a system of economic organization is unsound.

Resolved; that Great Britian should immediately grant complete independence to India.

No Congressional action was taken on any of the three propositions.

1932 - 1933

Resolved; that members of the lower house of Congress and the state legislature be elected by and proportion to membership of occupational groups.

No action was taken on this proposition.
1934 - 1935

Resolved; that the general welfare of the people is best promoted by democratic democracy.

Resolved; that a policy of development toward collectivism be permanently adopted by the United States.

No action was taken on either proposition.

1937 - 1938

Resolved; that isolationism is impractical in the modern world.

Resolved; that the several Southern states should adopt a unicameral system of legislation.

There was no later action on either proposition.

1940 - 1941

Resolved; that the nations of the Western Hemisphere should enter into a permanent union.

In 1948 the Organization of American States was founded with provisions for economic and military defense cooperation.

1941 - 1942

Resolved; that the federal government should require by law all labor unions in the United States.

No later action was taken on this proposition.

1945 - 1946

Resolved; that the foreign policy of the United States should be directed toward free trade among the nations of the world.

Congressional action had begun when the proposition was debated again in 1953-1954.
1946 - 1947
Resolved; that labor should have a direct share in management of industry.
No later action was taken on the proposition.

1950 - 1951
Resolved; that the non Communist nations of the world should form a new international organization.
No Congressional action was taken on the proposition.

1954 - 1955
Resolved; that the United States should extend diplomatic recognition to the Communist government of China.
Diplomatic recognition of China was first proposed in 1960.

1956 - 1957
Resolved; that the United States should discontinue direct foreign aid to foreign countries.
No Congressional action took place on the proposition.

1959 - 1960
Resolved; that Congress should have the power to reverse decisions of the Supreme Court.
No action was taken on the proposition.

1962 - 1963
Resolved; that the non Communist nations of the world should establish an economic community.
No later action was taken on the proposition.
1965 - 1966

Resolved; that law enforcement agencies in the United States should be given greater freedom in the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

The Supreme Court, on February 20, 1974, gave police and federal authorities greater freedom to use evidence obtained from authorized wiretaps and to conduct searches without warrants under certain conditions.

1966 - 1967

Resolved; that the United States should substantially reduce its foreign policy commitments.

In 1971 an overall reduction of our foreign policy commitments began, in the form of the disengagement of military installations in various parts of the world, including Southeast Asia, and the reduction of economic aid to certain countries.

1967 - 1968

Resolved; that the federal government should guarantee a minimum annual cash income to all citizens.

Senate Bill 113, January 16, 1971, called for a guaranteed annual income. It also became a campaign issue in the 1972 Presidential election.
Discussion

Upon examination of the data, the relevance of the debate program appears to be supported when the criterion for relevance involves the comparison of propositions with Congressional action on the proposition.

Of the 87 debate propositions used in the 53 year span of this study, 57 proposals met the criterion of legislative action within 3 years, which computes to 65.5%. In addition, of the 34.5% not meeting the criterion, 41% of those had eventual action taken on them. Thus, when combining these two percentages, data shows that of the 87 propositions, 67 of them, or 79% had action taken on them at some time, with only 21% having no action taken on this. This may be considered an admirable record.

It can also be noted that it was in the earliest years of the debate program that the greatest amount of action within the criterion was taken. For example, in the 17 debate propositions between 1921 to 1928, only five propositions had no Congressional action taken on them within the alloted time period. No other time span of this length has a consistancy this high.

Repetition of propositions was also evident. Congressional veto over the Supreme Court came up at three different times: 1925, 1936, and finally in 1960. Medical care was also debated three times, and other propositions such as trade agreements and disarmament were repeated in the course of the years studied.

Notice was also taken of the significance of the propositions through the years. Perhaps the significnace of a few of the propositions may be questioned, such as the curtailment of installment buying and chain stores, but one may conclude that when these propositions were debated they were vital issues of the day and were important to Americans at the time, much as the energy crises is important to us today, while a debater looking back on the proposition several years from now might well question its significance.
Conclusion

Some uncertainty still exists as to whether this project was undertaken to lend meaning to the debate program or justify the writer's participation in debate. But regardless of which motive took precedence, this study was found to be extremely worthwhile. Research involved with the paper has led to a greater insight into debate, as well of the workings of Congress. A certain amount of empathy was also felt with former debaters, who also were debating salient propositions that demanded constant work to keep up with daily developments in the area of the proposition.

Proving the relevance of the program also proved gratifying for other reasons. Debate has the potential of making a tremendous contribution to the American system, both by informing the public to vital issues and by training the participants to be rational decisions makers, as this process is fundamental to effective debating. Proving the relevance of the program using the criterion of the study showed that these are indeed vital issues contained in the proposition, and that the debater is involved in a program that not only helps him individually, but makes him aware of important aspects of these issues.

Speaking from a personal standpoint, debate not only makes one aware of important issues, but one can also gain a tremendous amount of general knowledge. As one participates in debate, one becomes able to think and analysis ideas and statements more clearly. In effect, debate sharpens one's mind, no doubt in part from having to do a great deal of thinking on one's feet. In fact, this writer's only regret is that she did not enter the debate program sooner.
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