Harangue

The Debaters Association of Victoria's Magazine for Students

In this issue...

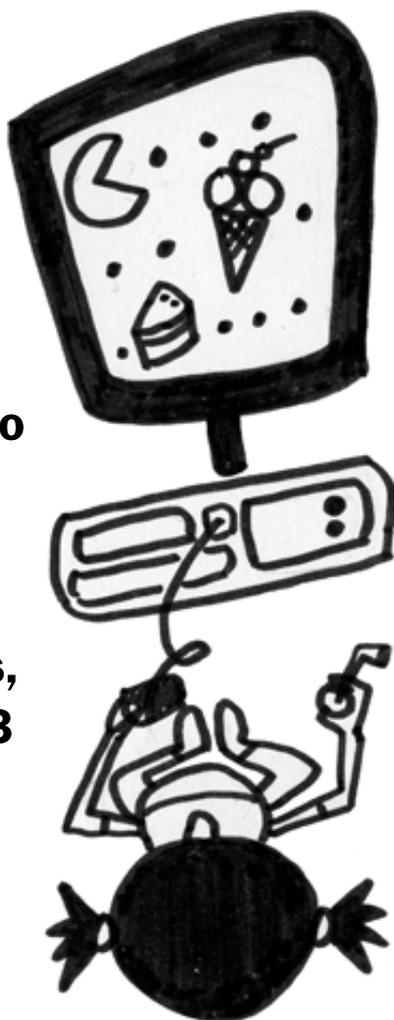**Secret topics:** the no-longer-secret path to success

Round 2 review: how the West was won

Win fame and fortune: the quiz

... and much more!

Video games: to tax or not to tax?

Topic reviews, pages 3 and 4.

Dear students,

With round two fading into the distant past, round three looms closer than ever. A, B, and C grade debaters will have to contend with secret/advised topics for the first time this year. Inside this issue of *Harangue*, you'll find a guide to help you use your preparation time wisely. Most importantly, remember to arrive at the host school one hour and fifteen minutes before the debate so that you have time to check your room allocations and be present for roll call before the topic is released.

Being aware and informed about current events is a great way to build up a knowledge base to use during secret topic preparation. Although you can take in any printed matter that you like, it's clearly impractical to bring a matter file for any conceivable topic. Much more effective (and also useful in areas other than debating) is to maintain good general knowledge of recent events and world affairs. One way to check your knowledge in this area is the *Harangue* quiz — and you might even win an iTunes voucher!

Good luck this round!

Michael Ciesielski
Publications editor

Visit the DAV's website: http://www.dav.com.au

You'll find:
- Future issues of *Harangue*
- Team ladders for each region
- The draw for each round
- The Resource Guide which will help you prepare for each topic
- Training articles
- and much, much more!

Secret Topic Timeline

While there isn't one correct way to prepare for a secret topic, the timeline below can help you if you're unsure about how to use your time. Remember, you have one hour to prepare, and you must also find your debating room in this time — if you are more than five minutes late, you will forfeit the debate.

0:00-0:05: Brainstorm. Take a couple of minutes to individually write down everything that occurs to you about the topic, and then compare notes.

0:05-0:15: Direction. As a team, think about the case that you're going to run, in "big picture" terms. Is there a problem? How will you fix it? Is there anything you have to prove? How will you do that? What kind of change are you proposing? How will that work? If anything in the topic needs defining, do that now, so everyone on the team stays consistent.

0:15-0:20: Team split. Looking at your notes from brainstorming, and considering any other ideas that have occurred to you, think about which arguments are the most important. The first speaker should probably talk about these. Consider what this leaves the second speaker, and think about whether the arguments are logically organised.

0:20-0:35: Write speeches. Now, the first and second speakers should write their speeches — but don't write full sentences on your cards. Using bullet points instead both helps you to write faster in preparation, and makes you a more engaging speaker during the debate. The third speaker should assist as needed, think about new ways to develop arguments, or consider what arguments the opposition might raise.

0:35-0:40: Check in. Make sure everyone is on the right track — the team should be consistent. The third speaker should by now have enough information to prepare their summary.

0:40-0:50: Keep writing! Make sure all your arguments are well-explained, and directly support or oppose the topic.

0:50-0:59: Leave! Find your debating room. Once you get to the room, keep preparing!

0:60- Debate. Even though you won't feel as well-prepared as usual, don't apologise or act flustered. Confident manner is just as important as your arguments.

Win with the *Harangue* Quiz!

Send your answers to these seven questions to the DAV office by the end of round 3. The best and/or most correct entry will win a $20 iTunes Music Card!

Send your answers to debater@dav.com.au by June 1st.

1. Which country was recently savaged by a cyclone? Is this the only reason we should be worried about the people in this country?

2. Is standardised testing for school students a good idea? Why?

3. Which two major banks are planning to merge? Is this good for shareholders? Is this good for consumers?

4. Which religion did Jamie Packer recently leave? What are the central beliefs of this religion?

5. What do you think about the recently released Federal budget?

6. What is the latest internal drama inside the Victorian Liberal Party.

7. What change to the layout of Melbourne's trains was recently announced? What is the rationale for this change?

D Grade Tip

The topic for this round, *that celebrities have too much influence over teenagers*, is a little bit different to the earlier topics this year. Rather than asking you to implement and argue for a change to the law or government policy, this debate is about arguing whether a statement is true or not using evidence. This kind of topic is often called an *empirical topic*.

When your team are preparing for the debate, think carefully about the setup. How will you define "too much"? What kind of evidence will you use to show this?
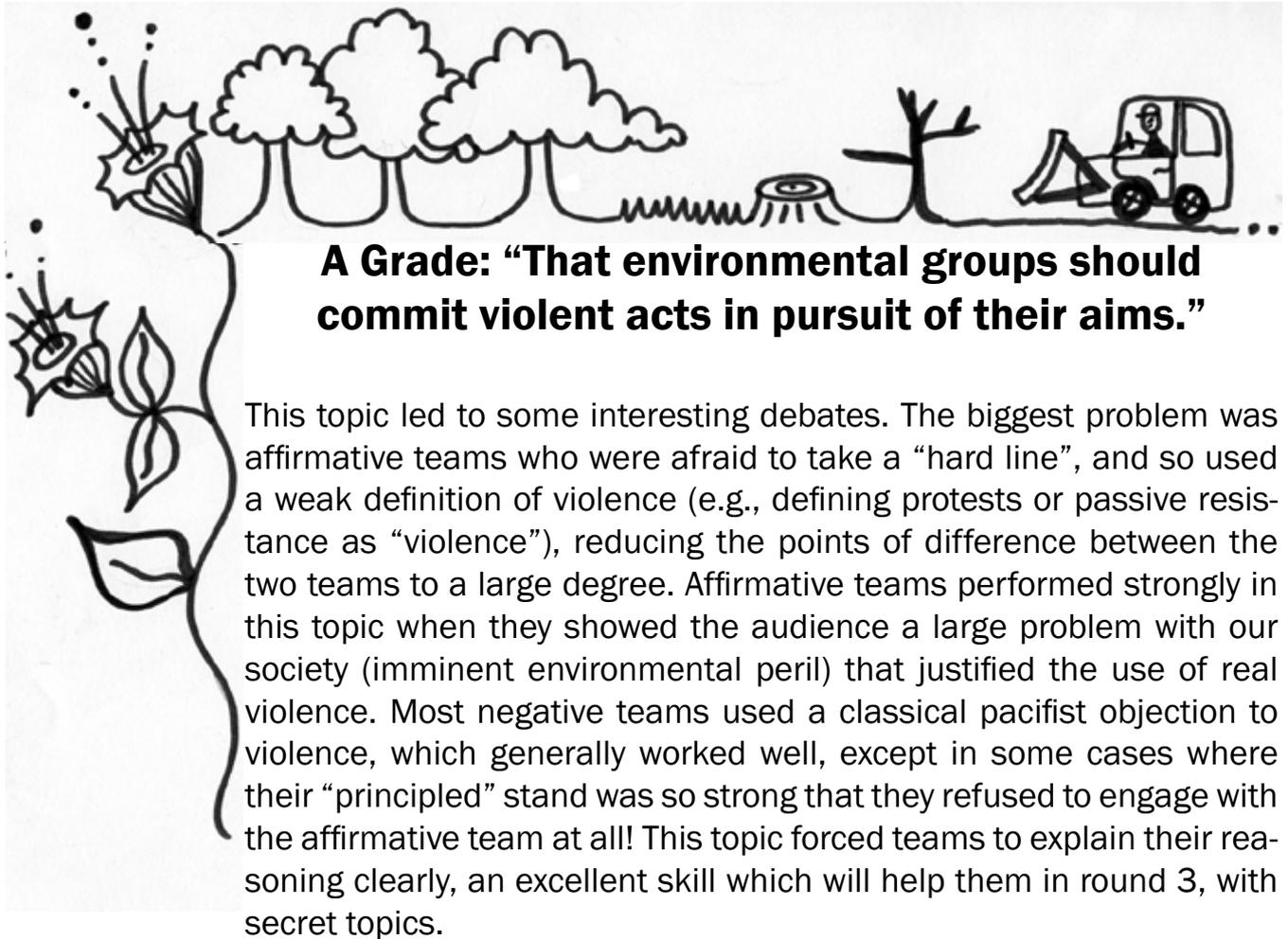
A Grade: "That environmental groups should commit violent acts in pursuit of their aims."

This topic led to some interesting debates. The biggest problem was affirmative teams who were afraid to take a "hard line", and so used a weak definition of violence (e.g., defining protests or passive resistance as "violence"), reducing the points of difference between the two teams to a large degree. Affirmative teams performed strongly in this topic when they showed the audience a large problem with our society (imminent environmental peril) that justified the use of real violence. Most negative teams used a classical pacifist objection to violence, which generally worked well, except in some cases where their "principled" stand was so strong that they refused to engage with the affirmative team at all! This topic forced teams to explain their reasoning clearly, an excellent skill which will help them in round 3, with secret topics.

B Grade: "That we should end live animal exports."

This topic provided an opportunity for many negative teams to argue something that they didn't necessarily believe — excellent practice! Most affirmative teams cited the cruelty to animals and suggested chilled meat exports as an alternative. This was a generally strong approach, but teams who looked dismissively down from the high moral ground and refused to engage their opposition didn't fare so well. Most negative teams either defended the status quo (current situation), or proposed additional regulation on live exports. Defending the status quo was difficult, given the well-documented concerns about animal cruelty — teams either had to deny an obvious problem, or defend an untenable position. Teams who used a counter-model with practical steps to improve animal welfare fared much better.
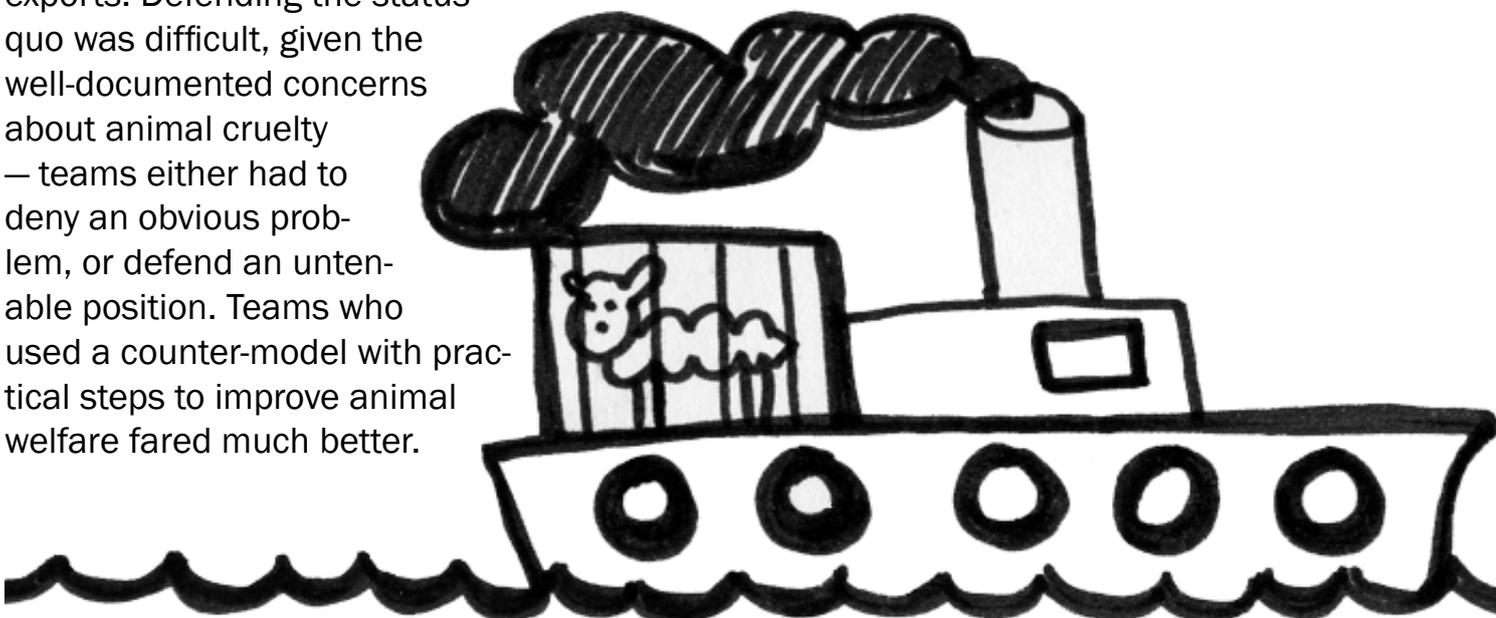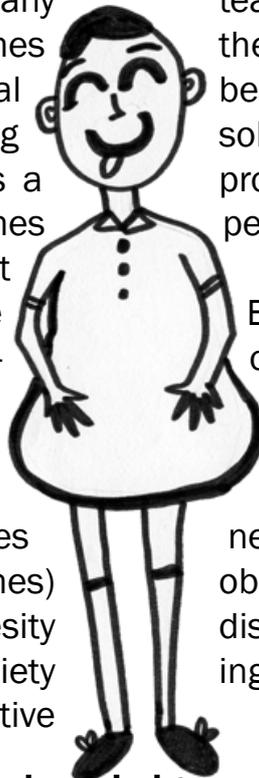
C Grade: "That we should outlaw alcohol."
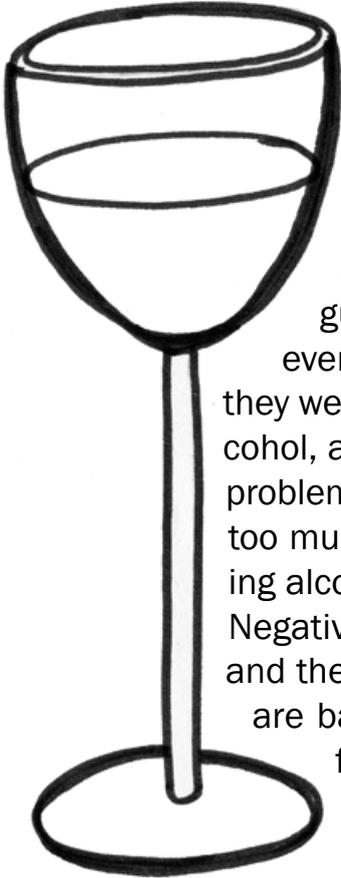
This topic allowed teams to participate in an age-old debate: the legality of alcohol. Many affirmative teams were able to point to real problems caused in society by the ready availability of alcohol, and argue that these problems justified banning alcohol for everyone. Affirmative teams performed strongly when they were able to show a practical plan for phasing out alcohol, and explain why this was the best way to solve the problems. Affirmative teams were weak when they spent too much time focusing on the personal effects of drinking alcohol, rather than how it affects society as a whole. Negative teams did well to speak about personal liberty, and the nature of banning things — explaining why things are banned, and why it's not justified in this case. The failed U.S. Prohibition provided a strong example for negative teams to use, but they needed to explain why the outcome would be the same in Australia, a different place and time.

D Grade: "That we should tax video games to fund programs that fight childhood obesity."

This topic proved a challenge for many teams. Affirmative teams sometimes turned the debate into an empirical debate (arguing a point of fact using evidence), arguing that there was a clear causal link between video games and childhood obesity. This wasn't required by the topic, and made the debate very difficult for the affirmative team, as there are clearly many other causes of childhood obesity. An easier way to set up the debate was to argue the virtues of taxing a luxury item (video games) that happens to contribute to obesity to fund programs beneficial to society (fighting childhood obesity). Affirmative teams needed to be clear about why they were taxing video games as the best way to solve the problem. Was it solely to fund the childhood obesity programs, or was it also to discourage people from buying video games?

Because of the wildly-varying nature of the affirmative case, negative teams performed strongest when they were engaged and responsive in the debate. Many successful negative teams agreed that childhood obesity was a problem worth fixing, but disagreed about the method, proposing an alternative solution.