IDEAS ABOUT SETTING MOTIONS – GUIDELINES FOR ADJUDICATION GROUPS

Alfred Snider, with many ideas taken from others, like Shengwu Li & Ansuya Rungasamy.

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Distribution of motions:
1. Have a variety of major issues debated about.
2. Avoid having too many of the same “type” of motion (fact, principle, policy, regret/celebrate, sci-fi/speculation, etc.).
3. While debating is a global activity, some of the motions should be more relevant to the location of the tournament.
4. Early debates feature simpler motions to get people started. Later motions become more difficult. Last prelim round and first breakout round might be most difficult to award those with knowledge.
5. Early motions should be clear in what opening is asked to do to avoid good teams on second table being hurt by weak teams in opening.
6. Avoid too many debates on the same principle (honesty, identity, etc.).
7. Final round motion should be one that would make for a big public debate, because hopefully that is what it will be. This will satisfy the media, sponsors, etc.

Process:
1. Each person on motion committee draws up a list of motions for consideration. A big list is good. 6 months before the tournament.
2. Big list is gathered together and sorted by area (economics, human rights, international relations, etc.) and distributed to the committee. 5 months before the tournament.
3. Knock out process of winnowing list down to manageable size, number to be determined. Committee members simply rate the motions 1-10, with 10 being best. 4 months before the tournament.

4. New motions may be added if they are super, but then a smaller group of motions should be developed (less than 40) making sure there are representatives of sequences indicated above. Again, simple rating. 3 months before the tournament.

5. Deep and serious discussion about motions takes place, utilizing motion construction guidelines. Committee members praise and criticize motions. 1-2 months before the tournament. At the end of this period there should be a strong list of twice as many motions as are needed.

6. More deep discussion to come up with the final list. Final meeting just before the tournament (hopefully in person) to look at the final list. Have two more motions in waiting in case news developments makes one motion irrelevant.

Motion construction: (Tuna)
1. Elegance – try and avoid extra words when possible.
2. Focus on one or two major issues. But you can apply a mechanism from one area to a problem in another area. (adjusted by Ansuya)
3. Avoid use of ambiguous words.
4. Pick motions that may excite/interest the debaters. (Ansuya)
5. Make division of ground clear, teams should know what they stand for.
6. Make sure our “intelligent citizen” would know something about it.
7. A motion selected can have been used before, but probably not in the region where the tournament is set or where many teams were recently present.
8. If the motion is relevant to only special parts of the world, set it there. Otherwise, it should be global in setting.
9. Use information slides for definitions only, be careful not to suggest arguments.

Motion construction in addition: (Shengwu Li)
http://trolleyproblem.blogspot.com/2012/01/advice-for-new-cas-setting-motions.html
1. Test for balance and depth.
   a. Find five logically consistent and persuasive arguments for each side.
   b. Neither side has one “silver bullet” argument that overcomes all others.
   c. If you were a debater, would you prefer one side of the motion over another if your goal were to win?
   d. Anticipate and avoid opening teams having options to “break” the debate through tricky definitions or models.
2. Each member of motion committee does not get a set number of motions. Use the best one, not “your motion.”
3. Do not set a motion because you can see yourself having a good time in opening government.
4. Strike a balance between “innovative” and “tried-and-true” motions.

Just some thoughts from me (and stolen from my colleagues and experience).