

BALANCE NEGATIVES: A FINAL REJOINDER

by Jason Baldwin

Mark Weber's strident response (March, 1996) to my article against the use of balance negatives in L/D (November, 1995) does nothing to dissuade me of the rightness of my original stance. Nonetheless, two points of clarification are in order:

1. Professor Weber argues that the negative deserves the advantage of the balance position to neutralize the affirmative advantage of the first and last speeches. According to Weber,

The reason that the affirmative speaks first and last is because they [sic] alone have the active "burden of proof" . . . To compensate for this extra burden the affirmative is given the opportunity to speak first and last because they [sic] must overcome the "presump-

tion" of the resolution.

In point of fact, rule 2 of NFL's official Lincoln/Douglas Debate ballot states, "There are no prescribed burdens in L-D as there are in policy debate; no 'burden of proof' and no 'presumption.'" In point of theory, any affirmative advantage derived from speaking first and last is at least balanced, if not outweighed, by the affirmative burden of refutation in 1AR, which forces the affirmative to cover a 7 minute negative constructive in a 4 minute speech, which is then itself subject to a 6 minute negative rebuttal. Neither fact nor theory provides any reason to grant the negative the additional advantages of a balance position.

2. Professor Weber chides me for my claim that most experienced judges reject the legitimacy of the balance negative and interprets my statement that I have never seen a

balance negative win a major multistate tournament as "irresponsible arrogance," "as if [Jason] were the authority on what should and shouldn't be debated on the national circuit." *Contra* Weber, my statements about judges and debaters do not imply any claim on my part to universal authority; I do, however, claim sufficient authority to report my own experience as a debater, which was that most experienced judges do not tolerate balance negatives, and that no balance negative won first place at a multistate tournament I attended. These are the incontrovertible facts of my experience, not value judgments or, as Weber would have it, character slurs; if they are, as Weber charges, irresponsible arrogance, it is the truth, and not I, which is guilty of the offense.

(Jason Baldwin was TOC Champion)