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SUMMARIZED GUIDE to the ENGLISH DEBATES 2006-2007

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... Presentation and Debate Procedures

The aim of the Presentations, Debates and Discussions, is to allow the students to put their knowledge of English to practical use in established formats that are commonly employed in most professional activities today. All Presentations, Debates and Discussions are indicated on the 28-week schedule.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations have become so important that a thorough knowledge of the requirements for success in them and a mastery of the techniques for making them are now indispensable in most professional fields. Whereas file cards, flipcharts and slides were the common instruments employed by professionals until the 90's, today POWERPOINT has become the means by which the most effective presentations are delivered. We should expect SUPINFO students to employ POWERPOINT as a matter of course since it will indubitably be a requirement in their future careers. However, initially, students will have 3 minutes to present subjects in the old-fashioned way. They will be allowed small file cards only with NOTES in BULLET POINT FORM. Reading from a prepared text will not be allowed. [If a student tries to read from a text, the teacher will confiscate it.]

In addition to file cards, flipcharts may be used, while visuals may be presented in slides or photographs, or on computer screens. When students have become familiar with the format, we should expect them to switch to the use of POWERPOINT exclusively.

DEBATES

In a Debate, there are formal rules to follow, and students will be required to support or attack a specific “resolution” (or topic of debate), which has been chosen for that day.

The word “debate” in English is not the same as “débat” in French. An English language Debate has a specific form and follows certain strict rules. The topic - called the “resolution” - is expressed in one sentence (examples: “Resolved that gays should have the right to marry and adopt children”; or **“Resolved that Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's) should be used as much as possible in the future”**). One team must support the resolution; the other team must oppose it. What is particularly interesting here is that it is quite possible for students to find themselves defending something that they do not personally believe.

One of the “nice” things about a typical English-language Debate is that only one person is ever speaking at one time. You never have three or four people all shouting at once in order to be heard.

METHODOLOGY FOR A DEBATE

A student from group A will get up and present his arguments (usually for three minutes or so) in support of or in opposition to the resolution. Then a student from group B has the chance to speak. He has two minutes to reply spontaneously to the arguments he has just heard (this is called the rebuttal); he then has three more minutes to present his prepared arguments in support of or in opposition to the resolution. Then a different student from group A has 2 minutes of rebuttal before giving his arguments for or against. And so on. In this way, each student will be expected to speak for 3 minutes from a prepared text and then for two minutes in a spontaneous fashion during the rebuttal.

Adopting the Presentation or Debate for use at SUPINFO :Debates or Presentations will take place as scheduled (q.v.). Students must sign up for a particular presentation or debate at any time up to 3 days before one or the other is due to take place.

For debates, students will sign up on the FOR or the AGAINST side of the inscription sheet; they must come to class fully prepared. If they fail to sign up in time, they will be placed in either of the groups at the teacher's discretion, irrespective of their stance on the issue of the debate (the resolution). They should be aware that the obligation to play the role of "devil's advocate" is part and parcel of their training for the future. They must learn to find arguments and present them as effectively as possible. They will not find this a particularly onerous task, however, as it is tantamount to playing a game. Students must put their telephone numbers on the inscription sheet, as they will be expected to contact each other to liaise on the division of labour and preparation. (This also applies to Presentations.) There are already a number of prepared texts. These should be sent to the students in advance.

The Student's role in both Presentations or Debates:

- Each student should immediately get the names and phone numbers of all the members of his or her group.
- The students phone each other and decide who is going to discuss what (division of labour), so that they do not all prepare the same thing.
- The students should be encouraged to browse the web individually and gather extra information on the topics, instead of depending only on the articles given/sent to them.

In preparing their own sections, students should become accustomed to writing in their own words, rather than using a "cut and paste" technique, as the articles are often in "journalese" and were written to be read, not spoken. The vocabulary and structures are likely to be too complex to make for a good oral presentation, and will need to be modified to reflect the students' own vocabulary and structures in what should be an easy and natural spoken style.

... 4.WEEK 4

a) Debate: In a democracy, gays should have the right to marry and to adopt children:

Text: Equal Rights: The Case for Gay Marriage

Text: 12 Reasons Why Gay Marriage Will Ruin Society: A Satire

b) Debate: Genetically Modified Organisms should be adopted and encouraged throughout the world.

Text: UN Food Agency Approves Biotech Crops

Text: Ducking the Truth About GMO's

... 20. DUCKING THE TRUTH ABOUT EUROPE'S GMO POLICY

Lawrence A. Kogan International Herald Tribune

Saturday, November 27, 2004

TRENTON, New Jersey If something walks quacks and swims like a duck, it probably is a duck. So the only thing surprising about a recent World Bank report is that otherwise reserved scholars minced no words in calling the

European Commission's obsession with avoiding genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, blatant trade protectionism.

The European Commission has long attempted to justify its strict health and environmental regulations as necessary to protect the public from uncertain risk associated with genetically modified crops. The World Bank report debunks this myth and offers empirical evidence of the commission's true motives.

What is really behind the commission's stringent regulations is European industry's comparative disadvantage in the use of genetically modified, or GM, crop technology. In drawing this conclusion, the study points to the significant role played by European industry in lobbying for protectionist barriers.

It is refreshing to see the report's authors move beyond the conventional wisdom that the European Union has been reluctant to allow GM crops and foods because Europeans are more concerned with protecting the natural environment and are less trusting of their food safety regulators than Americans are. The European Commission's anti-GM stance is so strong that it had to be based on more than just "cultural preferences."

The deeper question is this: Why would European producers lobby for overly strict rules that they too must face? What do they gain? The simple answer is based in classical trade economics. As the authors note, "when faced with a more efficient competitor, the optimal response of farmers in countries with a comparative disadvantage in GM adoption is to lobby for (or at least not resist) more-stringent GM standards."

Faced with increased competition in GM products from larger American, Canadian and Argentine GM exporters - which account for three-fifths of the world's soybean exports and four-fifths of global maize exports - domestic EU producers lobbied their governments and the European Commission to adopt strict GM controls.

Of course, GM imports also generated widespread opposition among outspoken and politically influential European consumer and environmental groups. This gave rise to a convergence of civil society and industry concerns that moved member state governments and the European Commission to respond in a politically popular manner that also sought to eliminate EU industry's

comparative economic disadvantage. That disadvantage could be eliminated only by creating artificial "product differentiation," first with the GM moratorium and then through strict EU-wide traceability and labelling regulations.

All of this, of course, was rational from an economic and political point of view. However, it is also arguably illegal from the perspective of international trade laws enforced by the World Trade Organization.

Perhaps worse still, EU biotech policy has had serious global repercussions, profoundly influencing the decisions of other food-exporting nations to avoid or severely restrict the use of GM technology. China, which has a steady but growing agricultural trade with Europe, has been unwilling to approve GM food production for fear of losing EU market access. But with nearly one-fifth of the world's population, China is in desperate need of the kinds of yield increases GM crops offer.

EU policies have also encouraged developing countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe to shun GM food aid for fear that even their non-GM food exports would be tarnished with a "GM taint" and be denied access to EU markets.

Some experts have blamed the now-ended GM moratorium for these decisions, but poor countries are scarcely in a better position now that the moratorium has been replaced with potentially crippling GM labelling and traceability rules.

Furthermore, as I discuss in a recent article in the U.S. journal *The National Interest*, EU support for anti-biotech campaigns by non-government organizations has even stymied basic research and development programs in countries like the Philippines. There, EU-funded activists have helped to reduce the financial incentives for research into GM products by raising needless hurdles to research. Activist campaigns have even made consumers reluctant to accept such publicly funded GM products as nutritionally enhanced "golden" rice. Tragically, while European industry has gained economically from these policies, developing countries have continued to suffer the human losses of hunger and disease.

The World Bank's findings are doubly disturbing because they reflect the observation by many other scholars of a growing trend in the use of EU regulatory policy to disguise trade barriers. Considering the significant economic

interests at stake in international trade, one cannot help but suspect that similar motivations underlie precautionary principle-based regulations, such as proposed EU regulations on chemicals or its directives on hazardous wastes.

Those, too, are rules that walk, quack and swim like protectionist ducks. (Lawrence A. Kogan, an international environment and trade attorney, has advised the U.S. National Foreign Trade Council on trade and environmental issues.)

Vocabulary:

ducking: avoiding

quacks: this is an sound approximating the noise made by a duck

minced no words: said directly; did not use diplomacy to say something

blatant: obvious; easy to see

debunks: to expose or ridicule the falseness, sham, or exaggerated claims of

stringent: severe; strict

crop: cultivated produce: example: the potato crop

conventional wisdom: a generally accepted idea

stance: position

strict: rigid; difficult; stringent

widespread: distributed over a wide region, or occurring in many places

concerns: worries

sought: looked for

traceability: Evidence or an indication of the former presence or existence of something; a vestige; the ability to follow something back to its origins

yield: production (Fr: rendement)

shun: avoid

tarnished: made less bright; to detract from or spoil; taint

taint: to infect, contaminate, corrupt, or spoil

scarcely: hardly, barely; not very much

crippling: to disable; impair; weaken

stymied: a situation or problem presenting such difficulties as to discourage or defeat any attempt to deal with or resolve it

needless: unnecessary

hurdles: barriers

reluctant: hesitant; unwilling; disinclined

findings: discoveries

at stake: (here) at risk

underlie: are the hidden basis of

hazardous: dangerous