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Boston University Debate Tournament . . .

Austin J. Freeley (BU)
University Coach of Debate

On March 29, 1947 six of the leading forensic teams in the East gathered at Boston University's Hayden Memorial Building at the invitation of the Debating Society to compete for a trophy placed in competition to mark the first Boston University Invitational Debate Tournament.

We, at Boston University, have long felt that the East lagged behind the rest of the nation in tournament debating. It was our hope that an event such as this would be a concrete contribution to the general revival of interest in forensic affairs that is sweeping the nation.

Plans for the tournament were begun in May, 1946, and student committeemen worked through the summer and fall to assure the smooth functioning of this event. Invitations were issued to seven teams that were selected on the basis of critical examination of debate records. An effort was made to include colleges that would represent Eastern debating at its best, both from the point of view of achievement and geographic distribution.

All seven teams that were invited promptly accepted. One team was forced to withdraw at the last moment because of the serious illness of one of its debaters.

The proposition for debate was the national question, "Resolved: That Labor Should Be Given a Direct Share in the Management of Industry." It was felt that the choice of the national question would give all teams an equal opportunity to prepare their cases. Each participating delegation consisted of two debaters prepared on both sides of the question and a faculty adviser to judge debates of other teams. The competition, which began at noon on Saturday, March 29th, developed as follows:

SEEDING ROUND: (Positions in this round were determined by lot.) Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Affirmative vs. Boston College, Negative. Decision: M. I. T.

Rutgers University, Affirmative vs. Boston University, Negative. Decision: Boston University. This debate was broadcast over the facilities of radio station WMEX.

Annapolis, Affirmative vs. West Point, Negative. Decision: Annapolis.

Columbia University drew a "bye" and did not take part in the first two rounds.

ROUND ONE: (Teams were placed on the basis of points scored in the Seeding Round.) Annapolis, Affirmative vs. M. I. T., Negative. Decision: Annapolis.

Rutgers University, Affirmative vs. West Point, Negative. Decision: Rutgers. This was one of the upsets of the tourney, as Army had outpointed Rutgers in the seeding round.

Boston University, Affirmative vs.

Boston College, Negative. Decision: Boston University. This was another surprise. Boston University had outpointed Boston College in the seeding round, but the twenty point margin given Boston University, the most decisive win in the tourney, came in what was expected to be a close debate.

ROUND TWO: Annapolis, Affirmative vs. Rutgers, Negative. Decision: Annapolis.

Boston University, Affirmative vs. Columbia, Negative. Decision: Boston University.

Between the second, or semi-final round, and the finals, the debaters and their faculty advisers were the guests of the Boston University Debating Society at a banquet held at the Hotel Sheraton.

The final round was opened by Dr. George M. Sneath, faculty adviser of the BU chapter of Delta Sigma Rho, who welcomed the visiting teams to the University. Tournament Chairman was Alan Edelstein, BU Senior; chairman of the final round was Frank Colbourn, Vice-President of the BU chapter of Delta Sigma Rho. Judges of the final round were faculty advisers of the visiting teams.

FINAL ROUND: Annapolis, Affirmative, represented by Midshipmen Robert Miller and John Jones met Boston University, Negative, represented by Lee Polisner, President of the BU chapter of Delta Sigma Rho, and Bernadette Martocchio.

Presentation of the trophy to the winning team was made by Dr. Daniel L. Marsh, President of Boston University.

An interesting sidelight of the tournament is the comparison of Affirmative and Negative wins. There were six Affirmative wins and three negative victories. Despite the preponderance of Affirmative decisions in the preliminary debates a Negative team won the final round. Consequently the question of which side has an inherent advantage in a debate on the national question remains unsettled—perhaps indicating that the proposition is nicely balanced.

The general highly favorable reaction to the tournament, both by the visiting teams and the general public, indicates that tournament debating stimulates wide-spread interest and may well be one of the most popular forms of forensic competition.

Consequently it is the intention of Boston University to make this tournament an annual affair and each year to bring together some of the leading Eastern teams. It is also our hope that as conditions permit an increase in the number of teams competing we will be able to include mid-western and western teams in this contest.