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To cite this article: R. O. T. Hollister (1917) Faculty judging, Quarterly Journal of Speech, 3:3, 235-241, DOI: [10.1080/00335631709360612](https://doi.org/10.1080/00335631709360612)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00335631709360612>

Published online: 05 Jun 2009.

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FACULTY JUDGING

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TO WHAT extent should teachers of public speaking judge their local contests in oratory and debate? This is the question I wish to discuss under the heading "faculty judging."

The question of judging contests is one of importance to every teacher of public speaking, for it influences his faith in contests, his spirit in classroom work, and the tone of public speaking in the school. Teachers and students cannot be long dissatisfied with the judging in contests without losing their heart in such contests and hence much of their interest in the more fundamental aims of departments of public speaking. In extreme cases they may feel that contests are not worth while, in others, that judges should be eliminated, but the majority have sought for better judgment. This search has led some to believe that public speaking contests should be judged by public speaking teachers. As a result many debates are now judged by teachers of public speaking or by men trained in intercollegiate contests, and in the last meeting of the Northern Oratorical League the faculty representatives from the seven colleges judged the contest, each man voting on all speakers except his own.

It is not, however, "faculty judging" in intercollegiate contests that I wish to discuss, but in local contests. I believe that as a general principle, all home contests leading to interscholastic contests should be judged by the members of the department of Public Speaking, or where such a department is not large enough, by judges selected by and acting with the members of this department. This is what I have in mind when I use the term "faculty judging." I do not mean that the teacher or teachers of public speaking should pick students to represent their school *without a formal contest*. Formal contests should by all means be held, but the teachers of public speaking should be entirely responsible for the judgment rendered.

The value of contests is recognized. While some may complain that the same spontaneity and force that is found in ex-

perienced speakers is not always present in academic contests, and may regret that contests are contests and not "actual" occasions, yet the fact remains that these contests stimulate students to develop their speech possibilities, and do much to strengthen the interest of the student body in the work of public speaking.

The fundamental purpose of these contests is to develop speech power, and not to maintain an intercollegiate sport. In athletic contests the main purpose is to provide recreation and advertising, but in oratorical contests and debates the main purpose is to educate. The contest is a means of drawing out the public speaking possibilities of students. In fact many of the most important educative values of courses in public speaking are involved in speaking contests.

If this be so, then it is evident that such contests belong to the department of Public Speaking rather than to that of Rhetoric, Economics, or History; that the responsibility for the success of these contests, for their proper conduct and the careful training of participants, should rest upon the teachers of public speaking, and should be regarded by them as part of their opportunity to encourage and develop better public speaking. Speaking contests should not belong primarily to the school as a whole, or to any organization of students in debating societies or oratorical associations, but to that department of academic work whose special purpose is to educate students in the various branches of public speaking. Where such a department does not exist, then the debating societies, or the teacher of English or History or Mathematics, or any individual or organization that realizes the value of public speaking contests may well take them in hand, and pray for the time when a department of public speaking with a teacher hired primarily for the work may be established.

The relation between departments of Public Speaking and speaking contests has always been close. In some cases departments have sprung from the demands created by contests, in many cases contests have been fostered by teachers of public speaking, but the ultimate goal of contests and teachers is the same—the development of better speech habits and greater speech power. Contests, then, logically belong to departments of Public Speaking as phases of education in the speech arts.

But should the responsibility for judging these contests rest entirely with the department of Public Speaking? Should the teachers exercise a controlling influence in the judgment rendered?

In considering this question certain facts should be understood. First, judging in a contest is a form of grading, an attempt to classify contestants according to their excellence. Any process of grading may be either easy or difficult. If a single factor is involved and a mechanical standard of measurement exists the grading is relatively easy. For example, peaches of a single variety are commonly graded for market according to size. There are big peaches, middle-sized peaches, and little peaches, and a simple machine that will measure size will grade peaches. But, when several factors are involved and the standard of grading is a personal one, judging becomes more complicated and difficult.

Again, it is easy to detect wide differences—the very large and the very small, the exceptionally good and the very poor; but narrow differences, even when a single factor is involved, are difficult to determine with certainty. For example, most students can tell whether one note is higher or lower than another when the interval is an octave, but many cannot tell when the interval is only a semitone. Wherever narrow differences and many factors are involved, and where the standard of measurement is subject to personal taste, judging becomes difficult and variable.

It is perfectly evident that in contests in oratory and debating many factors present themselves for measurement and grading. These are not of the same importance to all judges, and are not determined by a fixed mechanical standard. When we stop to think of just a few of the more general factors involved in public speaking, we realize how complex the process of grading is. There is stage presence—position of feet, poise of body, tilt of head, even dress; there are movements of the body—feet, arms, head, face, eyes; there is the voice with its pronunciation, distinctness, quality, modulation, rate, rhythm, etc.; there are the general psychological aspects of the speaker's relation to his audience—self-mastery, directness, sympathy, intimacy, etc.; there is the thought—its substance, logical arrangement, imagi-

native vitality, and the diction and style of its expression. Any one of these factors may appear of great or little importance, and all are subject to personal standards of measurement.

With these complex elements entering into the conclusions of judges, it is evident that uniformity of opinion cannot be expected, and that criticisms of judgment are inevitable. These criticisms come from two main sources: first, from the losers of the contest and their friends, and second, from disinterested differences of opinion. Both of these sources of criticism will continue to exist under any system of judging.

Another fact concerning judging is this: a trained judge is regarded in all walks of life as better than an untrained one. A trained judge is apt to recognize and weigh carefully a larger number of factors than an untrained one. In selecting a white wyandotte rooster for breeding an untrained judge will commonly choose the largest bird. He judges chickens by the market value, and bigness is all he can see. But the trained judge considers many points. So in judging an oratorical contest the untrained judge often selects the speaker with the loudest voice, or the longest gestures, or the most ornate style, or with a hobby like his own. The trained judge is much less apt to base his decision on a single factor.

There are some who will admit that a trained judge is best for most things, but not for speaking contests. They hold that speakers in "actual" life must be judged by their audiences and hence in contests should be judged by men and women who have not studied the art of speaking except as accidental auditors. They hold that the market value of the chicken is the best standard for improving the breed; that students will not have trained teachers of speech arts to judge them out of school, and hence should not have them in. The fallacies involved in this conclusion I shall leave for the reader to state for himself. But it seems reasonable to believe that if the function of contests and of departments of Public Speaking is to develop better standards of public speaking, the ones who should be directly responsible for the standards encouraged by the judgment in public speaking contests should be the teachers of public speaking. The only possible answer to this is that the standards of teachers of public speaking

are more artificial and less desirable than the standards of all sorts of men who are merely individuals out of which audiences are made. This charge of artificiality impeaches the teachers and departments of Public Speaking, and must be denied as a delusion.

But are teachers of public speaking the best trained judges? Are they not over trained? Do they not know too much? When a student loses a contest he sometimes thinks so, but common sense tells us that this objection to "faculty judging" has little real value. Common sense tells us that a man who has made a special study of public speaking is better trained than the man who has just observed the phenomenon, and if the trained judge is the best judge, the charge of incompetency cannot be sustained against teachers of public speaking.

A more serious objection to "faculty judging" is the charge of favoritism. It is thought that teachers will have favorites in their classes or fraternities, or will vote for old winners or upper-classmen, or will favor students who are taking courses in their departments. This charge is in a sense true, but in a larger sense false. It is true that teachers form favorable and unfavorable opinions of the speaking possibilities of students under their instruction. They have a chance to study students from week to week and from contest to contest, and the impressions thus gained enter into their decisions as judges of contests. This is a good thing. It tests the wearing qualities of contestants, and gives the judge time to consider more carefully the sources of their power or weakness. It gives the judge a better chance to know the character and personal traits of the contestants. The favoritism that comes from knowledge is on the whole beneficial.

If, however, there are teachers of public speaking so blind to the interests of their profession as to allow fraternity and social connections to outweigh their honest judgment, then even the selection of judges by such teachers is dangerous. Such favoritism should disqualify teachers from any part in the development of the speech possibility of students.

These objections to "faculty judging"—artificiality, incompetency and favoritism—come mostly from students disgruntled by failure to win, and must be expected. They are analogous to

the complaints of students who get lower marks in their class work than they want. They can either be accepted, and their dangerous tendencies nullified by frankness, fairness, and a spirit of helpfulness toward all contestants, or they may be avoided by a firm refusal to judge.

From the point of view of the teacher "faculty judging" has some features that may make us wish to avoid it. It opens us to the criticisms others might make. Our judgment may be questioned and our integrity impugned. Our harmonious relations with our fellow-teachers may be disturbed. We may be called upon to face a real conflict between our judgment and our friendship; between our desire to maintain our standards and the reputation of our school and our impulse to favor friends. One of our alibis for failure to win from other schools will be removed—we can no longer claim that our representatives were selected by incompetent judges. But in spite of these possibilities of personal discomfort our responsibility toward the cause of education in the speech arts makes it imperative for us to take a leading part in speaking contests—in controlling them, in advising contestants and in judging contests, and in instructing and training the winners for higher contests.

The day is past when we can stand aside from these contests and with a half apologetic spirit let them go on. If properly organized, directed, and encouraged they are of great educational value. High-grade judging is vital to their success. To the teachers of public speaking belongs the responsibility for such judging. Whether we judge these contests ourselves, or whether we sit with others of our choosing, or whether we secure judges from other professions, or whether we form a large jury of students of public speaking, the responsibility for high-grade judging is ours, and with it the opportunity to improve the standard of public speech.

I believe that teachers of public speaking should have a dominant part in judging their own contests. Expediency alone would prompt such belief. The necessity of finding a large number of judges each year for contests in oratory and debate makes it plain that the best judges cannot always be secured, and that commonplace judges grow tired of doing a duty which does

not belong to them. It is easier to depend on the teachers of public speaking and a few interested and faithful friends, and the chances for better judging are greatly increased. Such a method gives students more confidence in the judgment rendered, and reduces in their minds the probability of freakish decisions. The outcome of contests ceases to be a mere toss-up and at least assumes the form of expert judgment.