

**The Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Spencer Churchill
Society**

In Conjunction With

The Alberta Debate and Speech Association

and

The University of Alberta Debate Society

~ Presents ~



**2013-2014 Edmonton Journal
Churchill Debate and Speech Competitions
Presented by the Nearctic Group
Sponsored by the Edmonton Journal**

Preparatory Package

General Comments for Debate and Speech

This topic stems from contentious social, economic and political debates surrounding Churchill and the public exposing of government organizations involved in a form of misconduct. You are encouraged to take into account Churchill's support of democratic values, including freedom of speech and accountability, investigate the consequences (economic, political, social, moral) of both his views as well as modern implications, and most importantly relate it to modern examples. However, you are strongly encouraged not to base your defence solely on these examples, but to also consider the theoretical consequences of whistleblowing. This preparatory package will provide basic information on whistleblowing and Churchill's position regarding it, in addition to reasons for and against the motion. We would strongly encourage you to explore the information here, and find more in your own research.

The debates will include all grades 10, 11 and 12 in one category in Senior High National Open Style with speaking times of 8-8-8-8-4-4. Public speeches will include grades 10, 11 and 12 in one original oratory category and should not exceed five minutes. Should you have any questions, please contact Kerry Nield at nield@ualberta.ca.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the act of exposing an illegal or unethical misconduct in an organization. Recently, accusations of individuals such as Bradley Manning, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden have brought about publicity to government organizations that may have violated democratic responsibilities.

Individuals who choose to report a wrongdoing have the option to report his or her findings internally, (to the organization in question or the government liaison office,) or to an external source (often the media and public.) In this particular debate, the focus should be on the ramifications of reporting such findings to the public.



Whistleblowers are often prosecuted and abused by their organizations after going public with their claim. Many nations such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Korea and Ghana have comprehensive whistleblower laws protecting individuals from persecution. In addition, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2008 that whistleblowing was protected as freedom of expression.

Churchill's Position

Churchill was renowned for his belief in the democratic process. Freedom of speech was an important keystone to the assurance of a democratic government. Churchill's support

for an open democracy included his strong belief in open debate and his strong opposition for systems or ideologies that tried to dictate the choice or one's ability to think.

However, many historians believe that Churchill had prior knowledge of a bombing blitz during World War II of which he did not inform the British Public. There is discrepancy concerning the reason Churchill did not order any defensive measures or evacuations to protect the industrial city of Coventry is because he was not aware of the exact location of the bombings. Others believe the reason Churchill chose not to act was because he wished to conceal the abilities of a secret service division (Ultra) that decrypted the message.

Benefits of Whistleblowing

Many view whistleblowing as an essential part of the democratic process, keeping officials and government agencies in check. It encourages accountability and consequences for individuals and organizations. Indeed, some whistleblowers expose secrets that leave a long lasting mark on society. Examples include W. Mark Felt, an informant known only as "Deep Throat" for over thirty years who exposed information relating to the Watergate Scandal. Exposing misconduct allows for more aware and informed citizens, individuals capable of upholding the democratic values for which governments are based. Individuals who support whistleblowing believe that governments that hide secrets from the citizens who they seek to represent should be exposed.

Negatives of Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing may also have the potential to pose significant harm to individuals by leaking documents and practices to the public. It must be carefully considered if the government should be able to act in secrecy if the action in question requires a confidential reaction. The possibility for secret military operations to be exposed to the public (and enemy) by individuals unfamiliar with the consequence of the situation could jeopardize human lives. Furthermore, the potential for false accusations that wrongly implicate individuals or organizations is possible. The lasting harm that these claims can have on an organization or individual can be damaging and possibly irreversible.

Furthermore, many people believe that individuals who come forward to report misconduct are doing so in a selfish attempt to gain fame and self-promoting. Edward Snowden, of NSA fame, has been referred to as "a grandiose narcissist who deserves to be in prison" by the *New Yorker*. Whistleblowing may not be the most effective method of releasing precise information to the public.

Things to Think About

What kind of effects does exposing misconduct in government agencies have in terms of politics, social, moral, and general reception from the population?

Is whistleblowing an effective way for individuals to expose malpractice? Does it have potential to affect national security?

Does whistleblowing threaten the ability of the government to take action in order to protect the security of its citizens?