

DEBATE MODERATOR'S ROLE

**Bernard Shaw's personal observations and conclusions
based on moderating presidential debates
as shared with delegates to the
3rd International Debate Best Practices Symposium
Commission on Presidential Debates
National Democratic Institute
Washington, D.C.
April 2, 2015**

AFTER ALL YOUR HARD WORK AND PLANNING TO ORGANIZE YOUR DEBATE,
YOUR MOST CRUCIAL DECISION WILL BE SELECTING YOUR MODERATOR.

YOUR MODERATOR IS THE DEBATE BRIDGE TO THE PEOPLE, THE VOTERS.

THE MODERATOR IS NEITHER JUDGE, JURY NOR EXECUTIONER.

YOUR MODERATOR FACILITATES, MAKING THE DEBATE PROCESS WORK.

NOTHING – NOTHING – THE MODERATOR DOES OR SAYS SHOULD DETRACT
FROM THE DEBATE, THE CANDIDATES OR ELECTION ISSUES.

A MODERATOR IS NOT THE SHOW OR STAR OF THE PROGRAM – THE
CANDIDATES AND ISSUES ARE.

BEFORE A DEBATE, THERE SHOULD BE A MODERATOR'S RULES OF BEHAVIOR.

SHE OR HE SHOULD NOT DO RADIO, TELEVISION, NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE
INTERVIEWS.

THIS AVOIDS CONTROVERSY AND DISTRACTIONS FROM THE DEBATE. IT AVOIDS
THE APPEARANCE OF TAKING SIDES.

AFTER THE DEBATE, A MODERATOR MUST NEVER STATE HIS OR HER OPINION OF
THE CANDIDATES OR THEIR POSITIONS ON THE ISSUES.

YOU MUST AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF SHOWING FAVORITISM.

LET'S LOOK CLOSER AT THE WRETCHED LIFE OF A MODERATOR.

IT IS A LONELY BUT VITAL ROLE.

THERE IS TENSION.

THERE IS STRESS.

THERE IS PRESSURE FROM ALL SIDES.

IN THE RUN-UP TO A DEBATE, THE MODERATOR MUST BE A HERMIT, TO AVOID UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATIONS IN WHICH ONE CAN BE LOBBIED BY PARTISANS.

AFTER THE DEBATE, YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU KEPT YOUR DISTANCE FROM ALL SIDES.

IF THE ROLE IS PROPERLY FULFILLED, THE MODERATOR SHOULD BE PERCEIVED AS HAVING BEEN FAIR AND IMPARTIAL.

WHICH BRINGS US TO RULES OF THE DEBATE.

YOUR MODERATOR MUST MASTER THE RULES OF YOUR DEBATE, IN ORDER TO ENFORCE THEM FAIRLY.

AS MODERATOR, YOU MUST KNOW THE RULES AS WELL AS YOU KNOW YOUR BANK ACCOUNT!!

FINALLY, IT IS THE HIGHEST HONOR TO BE SELECTED FOR THIS ROLE.

ALSO, IT IS A SOBER RESPONSIBILITY OF UTMOST INTENSITY.

EACH OF YOU HAS WITHIN YOUR NATION, EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN AND MEN TO FULFILL THE MODERATOR'S ROLE.

YOUR CHALLENGE IS TO MAKE THE APPROPRIATE CHOICE OF MODERATOR AND PANELISTS TO PUT QUESTIONS TO THE CANDIDATES.

IF YOU DO THAT, THE PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE – VOTERS – WILL WIN!!

NOW, LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS AND SHARE OUR THOUGHTS AND CONCERNS.

#####