

# The Final Round<sup>1</sup>

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**St. Paul Catholic High School**

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**THBT we should bring back extinct species.**

## A Note about the Notes

These are my notes from the varsity final round at St. Paul Catholic High School on March 1, 2025. They are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. They are not verbatim transcripts but rather summarize what was said as I understood it. I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what the debater said or thinks they said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow, structured to follow arguments from one speech to the next. It looks like my written notes from the debate, cleaned up and formatted.

## The Final Round

The final round at St. Paul was between the Joel Barlow team of Owen Fellows and Zach Colangelo on the Government and Hall/Simsbury hybrid team of Eleanor Greenberg Farquar and Raymond Zhang on the Opposition. The debate was won by the Opposition team from Hall/Simsbury.

### 1) Prime Minister Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Resolution
- c) Definition: “extinct” not living
  - i) “bring back” emphasize keystone species
- d) Observation: 3 major extinctions in history
  - i) Meteors, ice age, humans
  - ii) Humans have a moral responsibility
- e) G1<sup>2</sup>: Moral imperative (“MI”<sup>3</sup>) to restore species
  - i) Humans think, feel understand
    - (1) See ecological consequences of loss of keystone species
    - (2) In particular, impact on other species
  - ii) This implies we have a MI
- f) G2: Restoration feasible and beneficial

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<sup>2</sup> “G1” indicates the Government first contention, “O2” the Opposition second contention and so forth.

<sup>3</sup> Defines “MI” as an abbreviation for “Moral Imperative”

- i) Examples
  - (1) 2003 Pyrenean Ibex
  - (2) Netherlands rewilds aurochs
  - (3) Reviving the New Zealand Forbes snipe would increase diversity
- ii) Reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone after over-hunting
  - (1) Reduced deer population
  - (2) Restored grassland and erosion
  - (3) Benefit rivers, salmon, bears
- POI: *Wolves not extinct, only relocated?***
  - (4) Effectively extinct in Yellowstone, brought back from Alaska
- iii) More examples
  - (1) California condor
  - (2) Blackfoot ferret
- iv) No harm occurs; restores natural balance
- g) G3: Revival helps protect species at risk of extinction
  - i) White rhino only 3 left
  - ii) Technology could help save, restore
- 2) Leader of the Opposition Constructive**
  - a) Intro/motion
  - b) We accept definitions
  - c) O1: Ineffective at increasing biodiversity
    - i) 2 to 8 times better to protect existing species
      - (1) \$ to restore 1 could save 2 endangered
      - (2) E.g., musk ox, yak, moose vs. woolly mammoth
  - d) O2: Encourages complacency with respect to endangered species
    - i) E.g., like Mom swooping in to protect children
      - (1) “we can just bring them back” reduces respect
- POI: *How else can we save the white rhino?***
  - (2) Plan to protect, change our behavior
- e) O3: Disrupts current ecosystem
  - i) Process can bring back diseases, retroviruses
  - ii) Creates a competition for resources, restore v conserve
- f) G1: MI?
  - i) Humans hunt, pollute, etc.
    - (1) We are the problem!
    - (2) MI to look at ourselves, not play God
- POI: *“not play God” means you wouldn’t develop tech like CRISPR?***
  - (3) Learning is not playing God
  - (4) Bringing back the dead is playing God
- g) G2: Grey wolves were alive in Alaska, not extinct
  - i) No tech, CRISPR, gene editing
  - ii) Humans have moved species around for millennia
- h) G3: contrast with O2
  - i) Better if we use existing species
- i) Counterplan: use funds to focus on root cause, human behavior
  - i) E.g. fight wildfires, inform the public, more parks, more conservation

- j) Are we ready for a radical change in our behavior?

### **3) Member of Government Constructive**

- a) Intro/motion
- b) O1: Use existing species?
  - i) Agree we should do this
    - (1) Not possible in all cases
    - (2) Extinct species don't exist anymore
  - ii) Compare to G3, restore tech/methods can protect existing species
- c) O2: Complacency?
  - i) We don't get rid of conservation on Gov

#### ***POI: What about funds diversion?***

- (1) PMC addressed cost effectiveness
- d) O3: Disruption?
  - i) Opp has no solvency
  - ii) Gov does nothing to harm ecosystems by bringing back keystone species
- e) G1: MI and human behavior?
  - i) Humans don't need to be the problem
    - (1) Restoration is the solution
  - ii) Not "playing God" any more than using pacemakers

#### ***POI: How are pacemakers like de-extinction?***

- (1) Same basic principle
- f) G2: Wolves?
  - i) Example shows benefit.
  - ii) If they were extinct, good to bring them back
- g) G3: vs. O2, same reply as G2 above
- h) Weighing
  - i) Gov: bring back species, fill eco-niche, thrive
  - ii) Opp: claims the same, with without de-extinction, how?
    - (1) If true, would be happening now
  - iii) Root cause: agree it's humans
    - (1) White rhino a good example, ignored by Opp

### **4) Member of the Opposition Constructive**

- a) Intro/motion
- b) White rhino? Like wolves, living species, not extinct
  - i) De-extinction not needed for technology to preserve species
- c) G1: MI?
  - i) Gov only restores keystone species
    - (1) What about all the others?
    - (2) Gov plan is limited, so not MI
  - ii) What is best for eco-system better standard
    - (1) O1: conservation 2 to 8 times more effective than de-extinction
    - (2) O3: shows negative impact of de-extinction on ecosystems
- d) G2: Ibex died after a few months
  - i) Mammoths not needed to clear the landscape
    - (1) Could use cows or lawnmowers
  - ii) Yellowstone wolves alive, so much cheaper

***POI: Is CRISPR playing God? When used to cure cancer?***

- (1) We are talking about ecosystems
- (2) CRISPR is about research and applied tech
- e) G3: Why no examples of using tech to protect existing species
  - i) It's infeasible, takes a long time
  - ii) Better to conserve what we have
- f) O1: Better return on \$ spent on preservation
  - i) 2 to 8 times more effective
- g) O2: Fund both? How? Examples?
  - i) Conflicts with \$ for conservation
  - ii) De-extinction less effective
- h) O3: Disrupts existing ecosystems by removing a niche
  - i) Risk of old diseases coming back
  - ii) Compete with existing species
- (1) Why trade newly de-extinct species for existing species?

**5) Leader of Opposition Rebuttal**

- a) Existing species will die as funds are diverted to de-extinction
  - i) \$\$\$ to bring back T-rex
  - ii) Better to fight wildfires
  - iii) Need to deal with the root causes
- b) No credible examples of restoration
  - i) Wolves brought down from Alaska
- c) O1: Conservation 2 to 8 times more effective
- d) O2: Why save existing if we can just "bring them back"?
  - i) Reduces awareness, reduces support
- e) O3: A T-rex would destroy the ecosystem
  - i) Playing God threatens civilization
  - ii) Gov brings back dominant species
  - iii) Better look at what animals need now
- f) Real problems need real solutions
  - i) Gov: imaginary solution
  - ii) Opp: parks and conservation

**6) Prime Minister Rebuttal**

- a) We agree environmental crisis is bad
  - i) Disagree on solution
  - ii) Opp can't bring species back
- b) Disease?
  - i) 3 examples of success with no diseases
- c) Playing God?
  - i) So is medicine
  - ii) So is saving the California condor
  - iii) No reason to stop
- d) Root cause?
  - i) No reason we can't do both
  - ii) Pat head and rub stomach at the same time
  - iii) False dichotomy

- iv) No Opp examples showing de-extinction bad
- e) Funding
  - i) We can use private investors
  - ii) \$200 million in Netherlands project
- f) Cost effective?
  - i) Opp says bring back 1 lose 2
  - ii) But Opp doesn't bring back any
    - (1) Keystone species show tangible benefits
    - (2) E.g., wolves in Yellowstone
- g) Success?
  - i) Ibex, auroch, tech keeps improving
  - ii) CRSPR use is "playing God" either way