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STATE SENATOR LAUDS UM DEBATERS

MISSOULA---

An impromptu debate staged recently at an old hotel in Dubois, Idaho, by four members of the snowbound University of Montana debate team has resulted in a letter of praise to UM President Robert Pantzer from a Montana State Senator who was also stranded at the hotel.

Sen. Edward N. Sparks, R-Butte, called the debate, which centered around the authority of the President of the United States, "very entertaining and highly informative" in his letter to President Pantzer. He praised UM debate coach Wes Shellen, who accompanied the debaters on their trip and suggested/impromptu debate, for his "unique ability to turn adversity into advantage."

The four UM students who staged the debate for about 40 travelers and townspeople in the hotel lobby in Dubois Sunday night, Jan. 26, were Russ Spaulding, Helena; Allen Sehestedt, Fremont, Neb.; Harold Spencer, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Mike Higgins, Black Eagle.

Eight UM debaters and coach Shellen were returning from the University of Utah Junior Varsity Tournament at Salt Lake City when they were stranded in Dubois overnight because of closed roads during a snow storm. Facing a boring evening in the small town, which lacks a theater and other recreational facilities, the debaters decided to stage a show for the other travelers who were stranded.

One member of the audience, Sen. Sparks, was sufficiently impressed by the debaters' performance to write a letter to President Pantzer after the stranded travelers left Dubois the next day.

Sen. Sparks said the team and its coach were to be "highly complimented for their outstanding performance in entertaining a group of people who would have found the evening extremely dull."

"I think all too often we take these good things for granted and are looking for an opportunity to pick apart the activities of young people attending our university system today," the Silverbow County legislator continued. He thanked the team and Shellen for a "most pleasant experience."

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