

ITEM 43 | DECORUM IN DEBATE

In debate a member must confine himself to the question before the assembly, and avoid personalities. He cannot reflect upon any act of the assembly, unless he intends to conclude his remarks with a motion to rescind such action, or else while debating such a motion. In referring to another member, he should, as much as possible, avoid using his name, rather referring to him as "the member who spoke last," or in some other way describing him. The officers of the assembly should always be referred to by their official titles. It is not allowable to arraign the motives of a member, but the nature or consequences of a measure may be condemned in strong terms. It is not the man, but the measure, that is the subject of debate.

If one desires to ask a question of the member speaking, he should rise, and without waiting to be recognized, say, "Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the gentleman a question." The chair then asks the speaker if he is willing to be interrupted, or the speaker may at once consent or decline, addressing, however, the chair, through whom the conversation must be carried on, as members cannot directly address one another in a deliberative assembly. If the speaker consents to the question, the time consumed by the interruption comes out of the time of the speaker.

If at any time the chairman rises to state a point of order, or give information, or otherwise speak, within his privilege, the member speaking must take his seat till the chairman has been heard first. When called to order by the chair the member must sit down until the question of order is decided. If his remarks are decided to be improper, he cannot proceed, if any one objects, without the leave of the assembly expressed by a vote, upon which question no debate is allowed.

Disorderly words should be taken down by the member who objects to them, or by the secretary, and then read to the member. If he denies them, the assembly shall decide by a vote whether they are his words or not. If a member cannot justify the words he used, and will not suitably apologize for using them, it is the duty of the assembly to act in the case. If the disorderly words are of a personal nature, after each party has been heard, and before the assembly proceeds to deliberate upon the case, both parties to the personality should retire, it being a general rule that no member should be present in the assembly when any matter relating to himself is under debate. It is not, however, necessary for the member objecting to the words to retire unless he is personally



involved in the case. Disorderly words to the presiding officer, or in respect to the official acts of an officer, do not involve the officer so as to require him to retire. If any business has taken place since the member spoke, it is too late to take notice of any disorderly words he used.

During debate, and while the chairman is speaking, or the assembly is engaged in voting, no member is permitted to disturb the assembly by whispering, or walking across the floor, or in any other way.

