



ROBERT RULES OF ORDER
ARTICLE IV: INCIDENTAL MOTIONS
(ALL-IN-ONE)

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ARTICLE IV
INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

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ROBERT RULES OF ORDER

PART: I

ARTICLE: IV

TITLE: Incidental Motions

ITEMS: 21 through 27



ITEM 21 | QUESTIONS OF ORDER AND APPEAL

A Question of Order takes precedence of the pending question out of which it arises; is in order when another has the floor, even interrupting a speech or the reading of a report; does not require a second; cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it; yields to privileged motions and the motion to lay on the table; and must be decided by the presiding officer without debate, unless in doubtful cases he submits the question to the assembly for decision, in which case it is debatable whenever an appeal would be. Before rendering his decision he may request the advice of persons of experience, which advice or opinion should usually be given sitting to avoid the appearance of debate. If the chair is still in doubt, he may submit the question to the assembly for its decision in a manner similar to this: "Mr. A raises the point of order that the amendment just offered [state the amendment] is not germane to the resolution. The chair is in doubt, and submits the question to the assembly. The question is, 'Is the amendment germane to the resolution?'" As no appeal can be taken from the decision of the assembly, this question is open to debate whenever an appeal would be, if the chair decided the question and an appeal were made from that decision. Therefore, it is debatable except when it relates to indecorum, or transgression of the rules of speaking, or to the priority of business, or when it is made during a division of the assembly, or while an undebatable question is pending. The question is put thus: "As many as are of opinion that the amendment is germane [or that the point is well taken] say aye; as many as are of a contrary opinion say no. The ayes have it, the amendment is in order, and the question is on its adoption." If the negative vote is the larger it would be announced thus: "The noes have it, the amendment is out of order, and the question is on the adoption of the resolution." Whenever the presiding officer decides a question of order, he has the right, without leaving his chair, to state the reasons for his decision, and any two members have the right to appeal from the decision, one making the appeal and the other seconding it.

It is the duty of the presiding officer to enforce the rules and orders of the assembly, without debate or delay. It is also the right of every member who notices the breach of a rule, to insist upon its enforcement. In such a case he rises from his seat and says. "Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order." The speaker immediately takes his seat, and the chairman requests the member to state his point of order, which he does and resumes his seat. The chair decides the point, and then, if no appeal is taken and



the member has not been guilty of any serious breach of decorum, the chair permits him to resume his speech. But, if his remarks are decided to be improper and any one objects, he cannot continue without a vote of the assembly to that effect. [See 43 for a full treatment of this subject of indecorum in debate]. The question of order must be raised at the time the breach of order occurs, so that after a motion has been discussed it is too late to raise the question as to whether it was in order, or for the chair to rule the motion out of order. The only exception is where the motion is in violation of the laws, or the constitution, by-laws, or standing rules of the organization, or of fundamental parliamentary principles, so that if adopted it would be null and void. In such cases it is never too late to raise a point of order against the motion. This is called raising a question, or point, of order, because the member in effect puts to the chair, whose duty it is to enforce order, the question as to whether there is not now a breach of order.

Instead of the method just described, it is usual, when it is simply a case of improper language used in debate, for the chair to call the speaker to order, or for a member to say, "I call the gentleman to order." The chairman decides whether the speaker is in or out of order, and proceeds as before.

Appeal. An appeal may be made from any decision of the chair (except when another appeal is pending), but it can be made only at the time the ruling is made. It is in order while another member has the floor. If any debate or business has intervened it is too late to appeal. An answer to a parliamentary inquiry is not a decision, and therefore cannot be appealed from. While an appeal is pending a question of order may be raised, which the chair decides peremptorily, there being no appeal from this decision. But the question as to the correctness of the ruling can be brought up afterwards when no other business is pending. An appeal yields to privileged motions, and to the motion to lay on the table. The effect of subsidiary motions is as follows: An appeal cannot be amended. If the decision from which an appeal is taken is of such a nature that the reversal of the ruling would not in any way affect the consideration of, or action on, the main question, then the main question does not adhere to the appeal, and its consideration is resumed as soon as the appeal is laid on the table, postponed, etc. But if the ruling affects the consideration of, or action on, the main question, then the main question adheres to the appeal, and when the latter is laid on the table, or postponed, the main question goes with it. Thus, if the appeal is

from the decision that a proposed amendment is out of order and the appeal is laid on the table, it would be absurd to come to final action on the main question and then afterwards reverse the decision of the chair and take up the amendment when there was no question to amend. The vote on an appeal may be reconsidered.

An appeal cannot be debated when it relates simply to indecorum, or to transgression of the rules of speaking, or to the priority of business, or if made during a division of the assembly, or while the immediately pending question is undebatable. When debatable, as it is in all other cases, no member is allowed to speak more than once except the presiding officer, who may at the close of the debate answer the arguments against the decision. Whether debatable or not, the chairman when stating the question on the appeal may, without leaving the chair, state the reasons for his decision.

When a member wishes to appeal from the decision of the chair he rises as soon as the decision is made, even though another has the floor, and without waiting to be recognized by the chair, says, "Mr. Chairman, I appeal from the decision of the chair." If this appeal is seconded, the chair should state clearly the question at issue, and his reasons for the decision if he thinks it necessary, and then state the question thus: "The question is, 'Shall the decision of the chair stand as the judgment of the assembly [or society, or club, etc.]?'" or, "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" To put the question he would say, "Those in the affirmative say aye," and after the affirmative vote has been taken he would say, "Those in the negative say no. The ayes have it and the decision of the chair is sustained [or stands as the judgment of the assembly]." Or, "The noes have it and the decision of the chair is reversed." In either case he immediately announces what is before the assembly as the result of the vote. If there is a tie vote the chair is sustained, and if the chair is a member of the assembly he may vote to make it a tie, on the principle that the decision of the chair stands until reversed by a majority, including the chairman if he is a member of the assembly. In stating the question, the word "assembly" should be replaced by "Society," or "club," or "board," etc., as the case may be. The announcement of a vote is not a decision of the chair. If a member doubts the correctness of the announcement he cannot appeal, but should call for a "Division" [25].



ITEM 22 | SUSPENSION OF THE RULES¹

The motion to suspend the rules may be made at any time when no question is pending; or while a question is pending, provided it is for a purpose connected with that question. It yields to all the privileged motions (except a call for the orders of the day), to the motion to lay on the table, and to incidental motions arising out of itself. It is undebatable and cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it, nor can a vote on it be reconsidered, nor can a motion to suspend the rules for the same purpose be renewed at the same meeting except by unanimous consent, though it may be renewed after an adjournment, even if the next meeting is held the same day.

When the assembly wishes to do something that cannot be done without violating its own rules, and yet it is not in conflict with its constitution, or by-laws, or with the fundamental principles of parliamentary law, it "suspends the rules that interfere with" the proposed action. The object of the suspension must be specified, and nothing else can be done under the suspension. The rules that can be suspended are those relating to priority of business, or to business procedure, or to admission to the meetings, etc., and would usually be comprised under the heads of rules of order. Sometimes societies include in their by-laws some rules relating to the transaction of business without any intention, evidently, of giving these rules any greater stability than is possessed by other rules of their class, and they may be suspended the same as if they were called rules of order. A standing rule as defined in 67 may be suspended by a majority vote. But sometimes the term "standing rules" is applied to what are strictly rules of order, and then, like rules of order, they require a two-thirds vote for their suspension. Nothing that requires previous notice and a two-thirds vote for its amendment can be suspended by less than a two-thirds vote.

No rule can be suspended when the negative vote is as large as the minority protected by that rule; nor can a rule protecting absentees be suspended even by general consent or a unanimous vote. For instance, a rule requiring notice of a motion to be given at a previous meeting cannot be suspended by a unanimous vote, as it protects absentees who do not give their consent. A rule requiring officers to be elected by ballot cannot be suspended by a unanimous vote, because the rule protects a minority of one from exposing his vote, and this he must do if he votes openly in the negative, or objects to giving general consent. Nor can this result be

accomplished by voting that the ballot of the assembly be cast by the secretary or any one else, as this does away with the essential principle of the ballot, namely, secrecy, and is a suspension of the by-law. and practically allows a viva voce vote. If it is desired to allow the suspension of a by-law that cannot be suspended under these rules, then it is necessary to provide in the by-laws for its suspension.

The Form of this motion is, "to suspend the rules that interfere with," etc., stating the object of the suspension, as, "the consideration of a resolution on,," which resolution is immediately offered after the rules are suspended, the chair recognizing for that purpose the member that moved to suspend the rules. or, if it is desired to consider a question which has been laid on the table, and cannot be taken up at that time because that class of business is not then in order, or to consider a question that has been postponed to another time, or that is in the order of business for another time, then the motion may be made thus, "I move to suspend the rules and take up [or consider] the resolution" When the object is not to take up a question for discussion but to adopt it without debate, the motion is made thus: "I move to suspend the rules and adopt [or agree to] the following resolution," which is then read: or, "I move to suspend the rules, and adopt [or agree to] the resolution on ..." The same form may be used in a case like this: "I move to suspend the rules, and admit to the privileges of the floor members of sister societies," which merely admits them to the hall.

Instead of a formal motion to suspend the rules, it is more usual to ask for general consent to do the particular business that is out of order. As soon as the request is made the chair inquires if there is any objection, and if no one objects, he directs the member to proceed just as if the rules had been suspended by a formal vote. [See General Consent 48.]

Footnotes

¹ In Congress the former practice was to suspend the rule as to the order of business in order to consider a particular bill but now it is customary "to suspend the rule and pass" the resolution or bill. H.R. Rule 27 contains the following:

"1. No rule shall be suspended except by a vote of two-thirds of the members voting, a quorum being present; nor shall the Speaker entertain a motion to suspend the rules except on the first and third Mondays of each month, preference being given on the first Monday to Individuals and on the third Monday to committees, and during the last six days of a session.



"2. All motions to suspend the rules shall, before being submitted to the House, be seconded by a majority by tellers, if demanded.

"3. When a motion to suspend the rules has been seconded, it shall be in order, before the final vote is taken thereon, to debate the proposition to be voted upon for forty minutes, one-half of such time to be given to debate in favor of, and one-half to debate in opposition to, such proposition -- and the same right of debate shall be allowed whenever the previous question has been ordered on any proposition on which there has been no debate."



ITEM 23 | OBJECTION TO THE CONSIDERATION OF A QUESTION

An objection may be made to the consideration of any original main motion, and to no others, provided it is made before there is any debate or before any subsidiary motion is stated. Thus, it may be applied to petitions and to communications that are not from a superior body, as well as to resolutions. It cannot be applied to incidental main motions [11], such as amendments to by-laws, or to reports of committees on subjects referred to them, etc. It is similar to a question of order in that it can be made when another has the floor, and does not require a second; and as the chairman can call a member to order, so he can put this question, if he deems it advisable, upon his own responsibility. It cannot be debated, or amended, or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. It yields to privileged motions and to the motion to lay on the table. A negative, but not an affirmative vote on the consideration may be reconsidered.¹

When an original main motion is made and any member wishes to prevent its consideration, he rises, although another has the floor, and says, "Mr. Chairman, I object to its consideration." The chairman immediately puts the question, "The consideration of the question has been objected to: Will the assembly consider it? [or, Shall the question be considered?]" If decided in the negative by a two-thirds vote, the whole matter is dismissed for that session; otherwise, the discussion continues as if this objection had never been made. The same question may be introduced at any succeeding session.

The Object of this motion is not to cut off debate (for which other motions are provided) but to enable the assembly to avoid altogether any question which it may deem irrelevant, unprofitable, or contentious. If the chair considers the question entirely outside the objects of the society, he should rule it out of order, from which decision an appeal may be taken.

Objection to the consideration of a question must not be confounded with objecting where unanimous consent, or a majority vote, is required. Thus, in case of the minority of a committee desiring to submit their views, a single member saying, "I object," prevents it, unless the assembly by a majority vote grants them permission.

Footnotes

¹ In Congress the introduction of a question may be prevented temporarily by a majority vote under H.R. Rule 16, §3, which is as follows:



"3. When any motion or proposition is made, the question, Will the House now consider it? shall not be put unless demanded by a member." If the House refuses to consider a bill the vote cannot be reconsidered. But this refusal does not prevent the question's being again introduced the same session. In assemblies having brief sessions lasting usually only a few hours, or at most not over a week, it is necessary that the assembly have the power by a two-thirds vote to decide that a question shall not be introduced during that session. As the refusal to consider the question prevents its renewal during the session, the vote may be reconsidered.



ITEM 24 | DIVISION OF A QUESTION, AND CONSIDERATION BY PARAGRAPH OR SERIATIM

Division of a Question.¹ The motion to divide a question can be applied only to main motions and to amendments. It takes precedence of nothing but the motion to postpone indefinitely, and yields to all privileged, incidental, and subsidiary motions except to amend and to postpone indefinitely. It may be amended but can have no other subsidiary motion applied to it. It is undebatable. It may be made at any time when the question to be divided, or the motion to postpone indefinitely, is immediately pending, even after the previous question has been ordered. But it is preferable to divide the question when it is first introduced. When divided each resolution or proposition is considered and voted on separately, the same as if it had been offered alone. The motion to adopt, which was pending when the question was divided, applies to all the parts into which the question has been divided and should not, therefore, be repeated. The formality of a vote on dividing the question is generally dispensed with, as it is usually arranged by general consent. But if this cannot be done, then a formal motion to divide is necessary, specifying the exact method of division.

When a motion relating to a certain subject contains several parts, each of which is capable of standing as a complete proposition if the others are removed, it can be divided into two or more propositions to be considered and voted on as distinct questions, by the assembly's adopting a motion to divide the question in a specified manner. The motion must clearly state how the question is to be divided, and any one else may propose a different division, and these different propositions, or amendments, should be treated as filling blanks; that is, they should be voted on in the order in which they are made, unless they suggest different numbers of questions, when the largest number is voted on first. If a resolution includes several distinct propositions, but is so written that they cannot be separated without its being rewritten, the question cannot be divided. The division must not require the secretary to do more than to mechanically separate the resolution into the required parts, prefixing to each part the words "Resolved, That," or "Ordered, That," and dropping conjunctions when necessary, and replacing pronouns by the nouns for which they stand, wherever the division makes it necessary. When the question is decided, each separate question must be a proper one for the assembly to act upon, if none of the others is adopted. Thus, a motion to "commit with instructions" is indivisible; because, if divided, and the motion to commit should fail, then the other



motion, to instruct the committee, would be absurd, as there would be no committee to instruct. The motion to "strike out certain words and insert others" is strictly one proposition and therefore indivisible.

If a series of independent resolutions relating to different subjects is included in one motion, it must be divided on the request of a single member, which request may be made while another has the floor. But however complicated a single proposition may be, no member has a right to insist upon its division. His remedy is to move that it be divided, if it is capable of division, or, if not, to move to strike out the objectionable parts. A motion to strike out a name in a resolution brings the assembly to a vote on that name just as well as would a division of the question, if it were allowed to go to that extent, which it is not. If a series of resolutions is proposed as a substitute for another series, such a motion is incapable of division; but a motion can be made to strike out any of the resolutions before the vote is taken on the substitution. After they have been substituted it is too late to strike out any of them. When a committee reports a number of amendments to a resolution referred to it, one vote may be taken on adopting, or agreeing to, all the amendments provided no one objects. But if a single member requests separate votes on one or more of the amendments, they must be considered separately. The others may all be voted on together.

Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim. Where an elaborate proposition is submitted, like a series of resolutions on one subject, or a set of by-laws, the parts being intimately connected, it should not be divided. The division would add greatly to the difficulty of perfecting the different paragraphs or by-laws by amendments. If the paragraphs are adopted separately, and amendments to succeeding paragraphs make it necessary to amend a preceding one, it can be done only by first reconsidering the vote on the preceding paragraph. In the case of by-laws the trouble is increased, because each by-law goes into effect as soon as adopted, and its amendment is controlled by any by-law or rule that may have been adopted on the subject. When the paragraphs are voted on separately no vote should be taken on the whole. But in all such cases the proper course is to consider the proposition by paragraph, or section, or resolution, or, as it is often called, seriatim. The chair should always adopt this course when the question consists of several paragraphs or resolutions, unless he thinks the assembly wishes to act on them immediately as a whole, when he asks if they shall be taken up by paragraph, and the matter

is settled informally. Should the chair neglect to take up the proposition by paragraph, any one may move that the proposition be considered by paragraph, or seriatim.

The method of procedure in acting upon a complicated report, as, a set of by-laws, or a series of resolutions that cannot well be divided, is as follows, the word "paragraph" being used to designate the natural subdivisions, whether they are paragraphs, sections, articles, or resolutions. The member submitting the report, having obtained the floor says that such and such committee submits the following report; or, that the committee recommends the adoption of the following resolutions. In either case he reads the report, or resolutions, and moves their adoption. Should he neglect to move their adoption, the chair should call for such a motion, or he may assume the motion and state the question accordingly. The chairman, or the secretary, or the member who reported it, as the chair decides is for the best interest of the assembly, then reads the first paragraph, which is explained by the reporting member, after which the chair asks, "Are there any amendments to this paragraph?" The paragraph is then open to debate and amendment. When no further amendments are proposed to this paragraph, the chair says, "There being no further amendments to this paragraph the next will be read." In a similar manner each paragraph in succession is read, explained if necessary, debated, and amended, the paragraphs being amended but not adopted. After all the paragraphs have been amended, the chair says the entire by-law, or paper, or resolution is open to amendment, when additional paragraphs may be inserted and any paragraph may be further amended. When the paper is satisfactorily amended, the preamble, if any, is treated the same way, and then a single vote is taken on the adoption of the entire paper, report, or series of resolutions. If the previous question is ordered on a resolution, or series of resolutions, or on a set of by-laws, before the preamble has been considered it does not apply to the preamble, unless expressly so stated, because the preamble cannot be considered until after debate has ceased on the resolutions or by-laws. It is not necessary to amend the numbers of the sections, paragraphs, etc., as it is the duty of the secretary to make all such corrections where changes are rendered necessary by amendments.



Footnotes

¹ Section 6 of H.R. Rule 16 is as follows: "6. On the demand of any member, before the question is put, a question shall be divided if it include propositions so distinct in substance that one being taken away a substantive proposition shall remain."



ITEM 25 | DIVISION OF THE ASSEMBLY, AND MOTIONS RELATING TO METHODS OF VOTING, OR TO CLOSING OR REOPENING THE POLLS

A Division of the Assembly¹ may be called for, without obtaining the floor, at any time after the question has been put, even after the vote has been announced and another has the floor, provided the vote was taken viva voce, or by show of hands, and it is called for before another motion has been made. This call, or motion, is made by saying, "I call for a division," or "I doubt the vote," or simply by calling out, "Division." It does not require a second, and cannot be debated, or amended, or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. As soon as a division is called for, the chair proceeds again to take the vote, this time by having the affirmative rise, and then when they are seated having the negative rise. While any member has the right to insist upon a rising vote, or a division, where there is any question as to the vote being a true expression of the will of the assembly, the chair should not permit this privilege to be abused to the annoyance of the assembly, by members constantly demanding a division where there is a full vote and no question as to which side is in the majority. It requires a majority vote to order the vote to be counted, or to be taken by yeas and nays (roll call) or by ballot. These motions are incidental to the question that is pending or has just been pending, and cannot be debated. When different methods are suggested they are usually treated not as amendments, but like filling blanks, the vote being taken first on the one taking the most time. In practice the method of taking a vote is generally agreed upon without the formality of a vote.

When the vote is taken by ballot during a meeting of the assembly, as soon as the chair thinks all have voted who wish to, he inquires if all have voted, and if there is no response he declares the polls closed, and the tellers proceed to count the vote. If a formal motion is made to close the polls it should not be recognized until all have presumably voted, and then it requires a two-thirds vote like motions to close debate or nominations. If members enter afterwards and it is desired to reopen the polls it can be done by a majority vote. None of these motions are debatable.

Footnotes

¹ See foot note, [9], for the rule of Congress.



ITEM 26 | MOTIONS RELATING TO METHODS OF MAKING

If no method of making nominations is designated by the by-laws or rules, and the assembly has adopted no order on the subject, any one can make a motion prescribing the method of nomination for an office to be filled. If the election is pending, this motion is incidental to it; if the election is not pending, it is an incidental main motion. It is undebatable and when it is an incidental motion it can have no subsidiary motion applied to it except to amend. It yields to privileged motions. The motion may provide for nominations being made by the chair; or from the floor, or open nominations as it is also called; or for a nominating committee to be appointed; or for nominations to be made by ballot; or by mail. [See Nominations and Elections, 66.]

Closing and Reopening Nominations. Before proceeding to an election, if nominations have been made from the floor or by a committee, the chair should inquire if there are any further nominations. If there is no response he declares the nominations closed. In very large bodies it is customary to make a motion to close nominations, but until a reasonable time has been given, this motion is not in order. It is a main motion, incidental to the nominations and elections, cannot be debated, can be amended as to the time, but can have no other subsidiary motion applied to it. It yields to privileged motions, and requires a two-thirds vote as it deprives members of one of their rights.

If for any reason it is desired to reopen nominations it may be done by a majority vote. This motion is undebatable. It can be amended as to the time, but no other subsidiary motion can be applied to it. It yields to privileged motions.



ITEM 27 | REQUESTS GROWING OUT OF BUSINESS OF THE ASSEMBLY

During the meetings of a deliberative assembly there are occasions when members wish to obtain information, or to do or to have done things that necessitate their making a request. Among these are the following, which will be treated separately:

- (a) Parliamentary Inquiry;
- (b) Request for Information;
- (c) Leave to Withdraw a Motion;
- (d) Reading Papers;
- (e) To be Excused from a Duty;
- (f) For any other Privilege.
- (a) Parliamentary Inquiry.

A parliamentary inquiry, if it relates to a question that requires immediate attention, may be made while another has the floor, or may even interrupt a speech. It should not, however, be permitted to interrupt a speaker any more than is necessary to do justice to the inquirer. It yields to privileged motions, if they were in order when the inquiry was made, and it cannot be debated or amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. The inquirer does not obtain the floor, but rises and says, "Mr. Chairman, I rise to a parliamentary inquiry." The chairman asks him to state his inquiry, and if he deems it pertinent, he answers it. Or, if the inquiry is made when another has the floor, and there is no necessity for answering it until the speech is finished, the chair may defer his answer until the speaker has closed his remarks. While it is not the duty of the chairman to answer questions of parliamentary law in general, it is his duty when requested by a member, to answer any questions on parliamentary law pertinent to the pending business that may be necessary to enable the member to make a suitable motion or to raise a point of order. The chairman is supposed to be familiar with parliamentary law, while many of the members are not. A member wishing to raise a point of order and yet in doubt, should rise to a parliamentary inquiry and ask for information. Or, for instance, he may wish to have the assembly act



immediately on a subject that is in the hands of a committee, and he does not know how to accomplish it; -
- his recourse is a parliamentary inquiry.

(b) Request for Information.

A request for information relating to the pending business is treated just as a parliamentary inquiry, and has the same privileges. The inquirer rises and says, "Mr. Chairman, I rise for information," or, "I rise to a point of information," whereupon the chair directs him to state the point upon which he desires information, and the procedure continues as in case of a parliamentary inquiry. If the information is desired of the speaker, instead of the chair, the inquirer upon rising says, "Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the gentleman a question." The chairman inquires if the speaker is willing to be interrupted, and if he consents, he directs the inquirer to proceed. The inquirer then asks the question through the chair, thus, "Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the gentleman," etc. The reply is made in the same way, as it is not in order for members to address one another in the assembly. While each speaker addresses the chair, the chair remains silent during the conversation. If the speaker consents to the interruption the time consumed is taken out of his time.

(c) Leave to Withdraw or Modify a Motion.¹

A request for leave to withdraw a motion, or a motion to grant such leave, may be made at any time before voting on the question has commenced, even though the motion has been amended. It requires no second. It may be made while incidental or subsidiary motions are pending, and these motions cease to be before the assembly when the question to which they are incidental or subsidiary is withdrawn. It yields to privileged motions, and cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. It is undebatable. When it is too late to renew it, the motion to reconsider cannot be withdrawn without unanimous consent. When a motion is withdrawn, the effect is the same as if it had never been made. Until a motion is stated by the chairman, the mover may withdraw or modify it without asking consent of any one. If he modifies it the seconder may withdraw his second. After the question has been stated it is in possession



of the assembly, and he can neither withdraw nor modify it without the consent of the assembly. When the mover requests permission to modify or withdraw his motion, the chair asks if there is any objection, and if there is none he announces that the motion is withdrawn or modified in such and such a way, as the case may be. If any one objects the chair puts the question on granting the request, or a motion may be made to grant it. In case the mover of a main motion wishes to accept an amendment that has been offered, without obtaining the floor, he says, "Mr. Chairman, I accept the amendment." If no objection is made the chair announces the question as amended. If any one objects, the chair states the question on the amendment, as it can be accepted only by general consent. A request for leave to do anything is treated the same as a motion to grant the leave except that the request must be made by the maker of the motion it is proposed to modify, while the motion to grant the leave is made by some one else and therefore requires no second as it is favored by the one making the request.

(d) Reading Papers.

If any member objects, a member has no right to read, or have the clerk read, from any paper or book, as a part of his speech, without the permission of the assembly. The request or the motion to grant such permission yields to privileged motions. It cannot be debated, or amended, or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. It is customary, however, to allow members to read printed extracts as parts of their speeches, as long as they do not abuse the privilege.

Where papers are laid before the assembly, every member has a right to have them read once, or if there is debate or amendment he has the right to have them read again, before he can be compelled to vote on them. Whenever a member asks for the reading of any such paper evidently for information, and not for delay, the chair should direct it to be read, if no one objects. But a member has not the right to have anything read (excepting as stated above) without permission of the assembly. If a member was absent from the hall when the paper under consideration was read, even though absent on duty, he cannot insist on its being again read, as the convenience



of the assembly is of more importance than that of a single member.

(e) To be Excused from a Duty.

If a member is elected to office, or appointed on a committee, or has any other duty placed on him, and he is unable or unwilling to perform the duty, if present he should decline it immediately, and if absent he should, upon learning of the fact, at once notify the secretary or president orally or in writing that he cannot accept the duty. In most organizations members cannot be compelled to accept office or perform any duties not required by the by-laws, and therefore they have the right to decline office. But if a member does not immediately decline, by his silence he accepts the office, and is under obligation to perform the duty until there has been a reasonable opportunity for his resignation to be accepted. The secretary, for instance, cannot relieve himself from the responsibility of his office by resigning. His responsibility as secretary does not cease until his resignation is accepted, or, at least, until there has been a reasonable time for its acceptance. It is seldom good policy to decline to accept a resignation. As a member has no right to continue to hold an office the duties of which he cannot or will not perform, so a society has no right to force an office on an unwilling member. When a member declines an office, no motion is necessary, unless the by-laws of the society make the performance of such duties obligatory upon members. If the member is present at the election, the vacancy is filled as if no one had been elected. If the member was not present at the election, when the chair announces his refusal to take the office, as it is a question of privilege relating to the organization of the society, the election to fill the vacancy may take place at once unless notice is required, or other provision for filling vacancies is provided by the by-laws. In the case of a resignation, the chair may at once state the question on accepting it, or a motion to that effect may be made. In either case it is debatable and may have any subsidiary motion applied to it. It yields to privileged and incidental motions.



(f) Request for Any Other Privilege.

When any request is to be made the member rises and addresses the chair, and as soon as he catches the eye of the chairman, states at once why he rises. He should rise as soon as a member yields the floor, and, though the floor is assigned to another, he still makes his request. He should never interrupt a member while speaking unless he is sure that the urgency of the case justifies it. As a rule all such questions are settled by general consent, or informally, but, if objection is made, a vote is taken. An explanation may be requested or given, but there is no debate. As these requests arise, they should be treated so as to interrupt the proceedings as little as is consistent with the demands of justice.

Footnotes

¹ In Congress a motion "may be withdrawn at any time before a decision or amendment." H.R. Rule 16, §2. The rule given above, which is in accordance with the common parliamentary law, is better adapted to ordinary assemblies.



APPENDIX



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