



ROBERT RULES OF ORDER
ARTICLE V: SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS
(ALL-IN-ONE)

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ARTICLE V
SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

E: TextBookDiscrimination@gmail.com
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ROBERT RULES OF ORDER

PART: I

ARTICLE: V

TITLE: Subsidiary Motions

ITEMS: 28 through 34



ITEM 28 | LAY ON THE TABLE

This motion takes precedence of all other subsidiary [12] motions and of such incidental [13] questions as are pending at the time it is made. It yields to privileged [14] motions and such motions as are incidental to itself. It is undebatable and cannot have any subsidiary motion applied to it. It may be applied to any main [11] motion; to any question of privilege or order of the day, after it is before the assembly for consideration; to an appeal that does not adhere to the main question, so that the action on the latter would not be affected by the reversal of the chair's decision; or to the motion to reconsider when immediately pending, in which case the question to be reconsidered goes to the table also. No motion that has another motion adhering to it can be laid on the table by itself; if laid on the table it carries with it everything that adheres to it. When a motion is taken from the table [35] everything is in the same condition, as far as practicable, as when the motion was laid on the table, except that if not taken up until the next session the effect of the previous question is exhausted. If debate has been closed by ordering the previous question, or otherwise, up to the moment of taking the last vote under the order, the questions still before the assembly may be laid on the table. Thus, if, while a resolution and an amendment and a motion to commit are pending, the previous question is ordered on the series of questions, and the vote has been taken and lost on the motion to commit, it is in order to lay on the table the resolution, which carries with it the adhering amendment.

This motion cannot be applied to anything except a question actually pending, therefore it is not in order to lay on the table a class of questions, as the orders of the day, or unfinished business, or reports of committees, because they are not pending questions, as only one main motion can be pending at a time.

To accomplish the desired object, which is evidently to reach a special subject or class of business, the proper course is to suspend the rules by a two-thirds vote and take up the desired question or class of business. Sometimes when it is desired to pass over the next order or class of business, that business is "passed," as it is called, by general consent. In such case, as soon as the business for which it was "passed" is disposed of, it is then taken up. By general consent, the business to come before the assembly may be considered in any order the assembly desires.

If a motion to lay on the table has been made and lost, or if a question laid on the table has been taken from the table, it shows



that the assembly wishes to consider the question now, and therefore a motion made the same day to lay that question on the table is out of order until there has been material progress in business or debate, or unless an unforeseen urgent matter requires immediate attention. The assembly cannot be required to vote again the same day on laying the question on the table unless there is such a change in the state of affairs as to make it a new question. Motions relating to adjournment or recess, made and lost, are not business justifying the renewal of the motion to lay on the table, but the renewal of the motion might be justified after a vote on an important amendment, or on the motion to commit. A vote on laying on the table cannot be reconsidered, because, if lost the motion may be renewed as soon as there has been material progress in debate or business, or even before if anything unforeseen occurs of such an urgent nature as to require immediate attention; and if adopted the question may be taken from the table as soon as the interrupting business has been disposed of and while no question is pending, and business of this class, or new or unfinished business, is in order.

The Form of this motion is, "I move to lay the question on the table," or, "That the question be laid on the table," or, "That the question lie on the table." It cannot be qualified in any way; if it is qualified, thus, "To lay the question on the table until 2 P.M.," the chair should state it properly as a motion to postpone until 2 P.M., which is a debatable question, and not the motion to lay on the table.

The Object¹ of this motion is to enable the assembly, in order to attend to more urgent business, to lay aside the pending question in such a way that its consideration may be resumed at the will of the assembly as easily as if it were a new question, and in preference to new questions competing with it for consideration. It is to the interest of the assembly that this object should be attained instantly by a majority vote, and therefore this motion must either apply to, or take precedence of, every debatable motion whatever its rank. It is undebatable, and requires only a majority vote, notwithstanding the fact that if not taken from the table the question is suppressed. These are dangerous privileges which are given to no other motion whose adoption would result in final action on a main motion. There is a great temptation to make an improper use of them, and lay questions on the table for the purpose of instantly suppressing them by a majority vote, instead of using the previous question, the legitimate motion to bring the assembly to an immediate vote. The fundamental principles of



parliamentary law require a two-thirds vote for every motion that suppresses a main question for the session without free debate. The motion to lay on the table being undebatable, and requiring only a majority vote, and having the highest rank of all subsidiary motions, is in direct conflict with these principles, if used to suppress a question. If habitually used in this way, it should, like the other motions to suppress without debate, require a two-thirds vote.

The minority has no remedy for the unfair use of this motion, but the evil can be slightly diminished as follows: The person who introduces a resolution is sometimes cut off from speaking by the motion to lay the question on the table being made as soon as the chair states the question, or even before. In such cases the introducer of the resolution should always claim the floor, to which he is entitled, and make his speech. Persons are commonly in such a hurry to make this motion that they neglect to address the chair and thus obtain the floor. In such case one of the minority should address the chair quickly, and if not given the floor, make the point of order that he is the first one to address the chair, and that the other member, not having the floor, was not entitled to make a motion [3].

As motions laid on the table are merely temporarily laid aside, the majority should remember that the minority may all stay to the moment of final adjournment and then be in the majority, and take up and pass the resolutions laid on the table. They may also take the question from the table at the next meeting in societies having regular meetings as frequently as quarterly. The safer and fairer method is to object to the consideration of the question if it is so objectionable that it is not desired to allow even its introducer to speak on it; or, if there has been debate so it cannot be objected to, then to move the previous question, which, if adopted, immediately brings the assembly to a vote. These are legitimate motions for getting at the sense of the members at once as to whether they wish the subject discussed, and, as they require a two-thirds vote, no one has a right to object to their being adopted.

The Effect of the adoption of this motion is to place on the table, that is, in charge of the secretary, the pending question and everything adhering to it; so, if an amendment is pending to a motion to refer a resolution to a committee, and the question is laid on the table, all these questions go together to the table, and when taken from the table they all come up together. An



amendment proposed to anything already adopted is a main motion, and therefore when laid on the table, does not carry with it the thing proposed to be amended. A question of privilege may be laid on the table without carrying with it the question it interrupted. In legislative bodies, and all others that do not have regular sessions as often as quarterly, questions laid on the table remain there for that entire session, unless taken up before the session closes. In deliberative bodies with regular sessions as frequent as quarterly, the sessions usually are very short and questions laid on the table remain there until the close of the next regular session, if not taken up earlier; just as in the same assemblies a question can be postponed to the next session, and the effect of the motion to reconsider, if not called up, does not terminate until the close of the next session. The reasons for any one of these rules apply with nearly equal force to the others. While a question is on the table no motion on the same subject is in order that would in any way affect the question that is on the table; it is necessary first to take the question from the table and move the new one as a substitute, or to make such other motion as is adapted to the case.

Footnotes

¹ The common parliamentary law in regard to this motion is thus laid down in Section 33 of Jefferson's Manual, the authority in both Houses of Congress: "4. When the House has something else which claims its present attention, but would be willing to reserve in their power to take up a proposition whenever it shall suit them, they order it to lie on their table. It may then be called for at any time." But, on account of the enormous number of bills introduced each session and the possibility of considering only a small fraction of them, Congress has been obliged to find some way by which the majority can quickly kill a bill. The high rank and undebatability of this motion enabled it to be used for this purpose by simply allowing its mover the right of recognition in preference to the member reporting the bill, and then not allowing a question to be taken from the table except under a suspension of the rules (unless it is a privileged matter), which requires a two-thirds vote. This complete revolution in the use of the motion to lay on the table renders all the practice of Congress in regard to this motion useless for any ordinary deliberative assembly. It is the extreme of a "gag law," and is only justifiable in an assembly where it is impossible to attend to one-tenth of the bills and resolutions introduced. In Congress, to lay on the table and the previous question require the same vote (a majority), and in all ordinary societies where to lay on the table is habitually used to kill questions, it should require the same vote as the previous question, namely, two-thirds.



ITEM 29 | THE PREVIOUS QUESTION¹

The Previous Question¹ takes precedence of all subsidiary [12] motions except to lay on the table, and yields to privileged [14] and incidental [13] motions, and to the motion to lay on the table. It is undebatable, and cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. The effect of an amendment may be obtained by calling for, or moving, the previous question on a different set of the pending questions (which must be consecutive and include the immediately pending question), in which case the vote is taken first on the motion which orders the previous question on the largest number of questions. It may be applied to any debatable or amendable motion or motions, and if unqualified it applies only to the immediately pending motion. It may be qualified so as to apply to a series of pending questions, or to a consecutive part of a series beginning with the immediately pending question. It requires a two-thirds vote for its adoption. After the previous question has been ordered, up to the time of taking the last vote under it, the questions that have not been voted on may be laid on the table, but can have no other subsidiary motions applied to them. An appeal made after the previous question has been demanded or ordered and before its exhaustion, is undebatable. The previous question, before any vote has been taken under it, may be reconsidered, but not after its partial execution. As no one would vote to reconsider the vote ordering the previous question who was not opposed to the previous question, it follows that if the motion to reconsider prevails, it will be impossible to secure a two-thirds vote for the previous question, and, therefore, if it is voted to reconsider the previous question it is considered as rejecting that question and placing the business as it was before the previous question was moved. If a vote taken under the previous question is reconsidered before the previous question is exhausted, there can be no debate or amendment of the proposition; but if the reconsideration is after the previous question is exhausted, then the motion to reconsider, as well as the question to be reconsidered, is divested of the previous question and is debatable. If lost, the previous question may be renewed after sufficient progress in debate to make it a new question.

The Form of this motion is, "I move [or demand, or call for] the previous question on [here specify the motions on which it is desired to be ordered]." As it cannot be debated or amended, it must be voted on immediately. The form of putting the question² is, "The previous question is moved [or demanded, or called for]



on [specify the motions on which the previous question is demanded].

As many as are in favor of ordering the previous question on [repeat the motions] will rise." When they are seated he continues, "Those opposed will rise. There being two-thirds in favor of the motion, the affirmative has it and the previous question is ordered on [repeat the motions upon which it is ordered]. The question is [or recurs] on [state the immediately pending question]. As many as are in favor," etc. If the previous question is ordered the chair immediately proceeds to put to vote the questions on which it was ordered until all the votes are taken, or there is an affirmative vote on postponing definitely or indefinitely, or committing, either of which exhausts the previous question. If there can be the slightest doubt as to the vote the chair should take it again immediately, counting each side. If less than two-thirds vote in the affirmative, the chair announces the vote thus: "There not being two-thirds in favor of the motion, the negative has it and the motion is lost. The question is on," etc., the chair stating the question on the immediately pending question, which is again open to debate and amendment, the same as if the previous question had not been demanded.

The question may be put in a form similar to this: "The previous question has been moved on the motion to commit and its amendment. As many as are in favor of now putting the question on the motion to commit and its amendment will rise; those opposed will rise. There being two-thirds in favor of the motion, the debate is closed on the motion to commit and its amendment, and the question is on the amendment," etc. While this form is allowable, yet it is better to conform to the regular parliamentary form as given above.

The Object of the previous question is to bring the assembly at once to a vote on the immediately pending question and on such other pending questions as may be specified in the demand. It is the proper motion to use for this purpose, whether the object is to adopt or to kill the proposition on which it is ordered, without further debate or motions to amend.

The Effect³ of ordering the previous question is to close debate immediately, to prevent the moving of amendments or any other subsidiary motions except to lay on the table, and to bring the assembly at once to a vote on the immediately pending question, and such other pending questions as were specified in the demand, or motion. If the previous question is ordered on more than one question, then its effect extends to those questions and is not



exhausted until they are voted on, or they are disposed of as shown below under exhaustion of the previous question. If the previous question is voted down, the discussion continues as if this motion had not been made. The effect of the previous question does not extend beyond the session in which it was adopted. Should any of the questions upon which it was ordered come before the assembly at a future session they are divested of the previous question and are open to debate and amendment.

The previous question is Exhausted during the session as follows:

(1) When the previous question is unqualified, its effect terminates as soon as the vote is taken on the immediately pending question.

(2) If the previous question is ordered on more than one of the pending questions its effect is not exhausted until all of the questions upon which it has been ordered have been voted on, or else the effect of those that have been voted on has been to commit the main question, or to postpone it definitely or indefinitely.

If, before the exhaustion of the previous question, the questions on which it has been ordered that have not been voted on are laid on the table, the previous question is not exhausted thereby, so that when they are taken from the table during the same session, they are still under the previous question and cannot be debated or amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to them.

NOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION.

Much of the confusion heretofore existing in regard to the Previous Question has arisen from the great changes which this motion has undergone. As originally designed, and at present used in the English Parliament, the previous question was not intended to suppress debate, but to suppress the main question, and therefore, in England, it is always moved by the enemies of the measure, who then vote in the negative. It was first used in 1604, and was intended to be applied only to delicate questions; it was put in this form, "Shall the main question be put?" and being negatived, the main question was dismissed for that session. Its form was afterwards changed to this, which is used at present, "Shall the main question be now put?" and if negatived the question was dismissed, at first only until after the ensuing debate was over, but now, for that day. The motion for the previous



question could be debated; when once put to vote, whether decided affirmatively or negatively, it prevented any discussion of the main question, for, if decided affirmatively, the main question was immediately put, and if decided negatively (that is, that the main question be not now put), it was dismissed for the day.

Our Congress has gradually changed the English Previous Question into an entirely different motion, so that, while in England, the mover of the previous question votes against it, in this country he votes for it. At first the previous question was debatable; if adopted it cut off all motions except the main question, which was immediately put to vote, and if rejected the main question was dismissed for that day as in England. Congress, in 1805, made it undebatable. In 1840 the rule was changed so as not to cut off amendments but to bring the House to a vote first upon pending amendments, and then upon the main question. In 1848 its effect was changed again so as to bring the House to a vote upon the motion to commit if it had been made, then upon amendments reported by a committee, if any, then upon pending amendments, and finally upon the main question. In 1860 Congress decided that the only effect of the previous question, if the motion to postpone were pending, should be to bring the House to a direct vote on the postponement-- thus preventing the previous question from cutting off any pending motion. In 1860 the rule was modified also so as to allow it to be applied if so specified to an amendment or to an amendment of an amendment, without affecting anything else, and so that if the previous question were lost the debate would be resumed. In 1880 the rule was further changed so as to allow it to be applied to single motions, or to a series of motions, the motions to which it is to apply being specified in the demand; and 30 minutes' debate, equally divided between the friends and the enemies of the proposition, was allowed after the previous question had been ordered, if there had been no debate previously. In 1890 the 30 minutes' debate was changed to 40 minutes. The previous question now is simply a motion to close debate and proceed to voting on the immediately pending question and such other pending questions as it has been ordered upon.



Footnotes

1. The previous question is the only motion used in the House of Representatives for closing debate. It may be ordered by a majority vote. If there has been no previous debate on the subject, forty minutes of debate, to be equally divided between those opposed to and those in favor of the proposition, is allowed after the previous question has been ordered. The motion is not allowed in the Senate. House Rule 17 is as follows:

"1. There shall be a motion for the previous question, which, being ordered by a majority of members voting, if a quorum be present shall have the effect to cut off all debate and bring the House to a direct vote upon the immediate question or questions on which it has been asked and ordered. The previous question may be asked and ordered upon a single motion, a series of motions allowable under the rules, or an amendment or amendments, or may be made to embrace all authorized motions or amendments and include the bill to its passage or rejection. It shall be in order pending the motion for or after the previous question shall have been ordered on its passage, for the Speaker to entertain and submit a motion to commit, with or without instructions, to a standing or select committee.

"2. A call of the House shall not be in order after the previous question is ordered, unless it shall appear upon an actual count by the Speaker that a quorum is not present.

"3. All incidental questions of order arising after a motion is made for the previous question, and pending such motion, shall be decided, whether on appeal or otherwise, without debate."

2. The Congressional form of putting this question is "The gentleman from ... demands the previous question. As many as are in favor of ordering the previous question will say Aye; as many as are opposed will say No."

3. The former practice of allowing the member reporting a bill from a committee to close the debate with a speech after the previous question has been ordered, has been abandoned by Congress.



ITEM 30 | LIMIT OR EXTEND LIMITS OF DEBATE

Motions, or orders, to limit or extend the limits of debate, like the previous question, take precedence of all debatable motions, may be applied to any debatable motion or series of motions, and, if not specified to the contrary, apply only to the immediately pending question. If it is voted to limit the debate, the order applies to all incidental and subsidiary motions and the motion to reconsider, subsequently made, as long as the order is in force. But an order extending the limits of debate does not apply to any motions except the immediately pending one and such others as are specified. They are undebatable, and require a two-thirds vote for their adoption. These motions may be amended, but can have no other subsidiary motion applied to them. They yield to privileged [14] and incidental [13] motions, and to the motions to lay on the table and for the previous question. They may be made only when the immediately pending question is debatable. When one of them is pending, another one that does not conflict with it may be moved as an amendment. After one of these motions has been adopted it is in order to move another one of them, provided it does not conflict with the one in force. This motion to limit or extend the limits of debate may be reconsidered even though the order has been partially executed, and if lost it may be renewed after there has been sufficient progress in debate to make it a new question.

After an order is adopted closing debate at a certain hour, or limiting it to a certain time, the motions to postpone and to commit cannot be moved until the vote adopting the order has been reconsidered; but the pending question may be laid on the table, and if it is not taken from the table until after the hour appointed for closing the debate and taking the vote, no debate or motion to amend is allowed, as the chair should immediately put the question. After the adoption of an order limiting the number or length of the speeches, or extending these limits, it is in order to move any of the other subsidiary [12] motions on the pending question.

An order modifying the limits of debate on a question is in force only during the session in which it was adopted. If the question in any way goes over to the next session it is divested of this order and is open to debate according to the regular rules.

The various Forms of this motion are as follows:

- (1) To fix the hour for closing debate and putting the question, the form is similar to this: "I move that debate close and the question be put on the resolution at 9 P.M."



(2) To limit the length of the debate, the motion may be made thus: "I move that debate on the pending amendment be limited to twenty minutes."

(3) To reduce or increase the number and length of speeches, the motion should be made in a form similar to one of these: "I move that debate on the pending resolution and its amendments be limited to one speech of five minutes from each member;" "I move that Mr. A's time be extended ten minutes;" "I move that Messrs. A and B (the leaders on the two sides) be allowed twenty minutes each, to be divided between their two speeches at their pleasure, and that other members be limited to one speech of two minutes each, and that the question be put at 9 P.M."



ITEM 31 | POSTPONE DEFINITELY, OR TO A CERTAIN TIME¹

The time to which a question is postponed must fall within the session or the next session,² and, if it is desired to postpone it to a different time, which must not be beyond the next regular session, it is necessary first to fix the time for an adjourned meeting, and then the question may be postponed to that meeting. Some societies have frequent meetings for literary or other purposes at which business may be transacted, while they hold every month or quarter a meeting especially for business. In such societies these rules apply particularly to the regular business meetings, to which questions may be postponed from the previous regular business meeting or from any of the intervening meetings. Neither the motion to postpone definitely nor an amendment to it, is in order when it has the effect of an indefinite postponement; that is, to defeat the measure, as, for instance, to postpone until tomorrow a motion to accept an invitation to a banquet tonight. If the motion to postpone indefinitely is in order at the time, the chair may treat it as such at his discretion, but it cannot be recognized as a motion to postpone definitely. It is not in order to postpone a class of business, as reports of committees; as each report is announced or called for, it may be postponed, or the rules may be suspended by a two-thirds vote and the desired question be taken up. A matter that is required by the by-laws to be attended to at a specified time or meeting as the election of officers cannot, in advance, be postponed to another time or meeting, but when that specified time or meeting arrives the assembly may postpone it to an adjourned meeting. This is sometimes advisable as in case of an annual meeting for the election of officers occurring on a very stormy night so that a bare quorum is present. After an order of the day or a question of privilege is before the assembly for action, its further consideration may be postponed, or any other subsidiary motion may be applied to it. When a question has been postponed to a certain time, it becomes an order of the day for that time and cannot be taken up before that time except by a reconsideration, or by suspending the rules for that purpose, which requires a two-thirds vote. [See Orders of the Day, 20, for the treatment of questions that have been postponed definitely.]

The Form of this motion depends upon the object sought.

- (1) If the object is simply to postpone the question to the next meeting, when it will have precedence of new business, the form of the motion is "to postpone the question [or, that

the question be postponed] to the next meeting." It then becomes a general order for that meeting.

(2) If the object is to specify an hour when the question will be taken up as soon as the question then pending, if there is any, is disposed of, the form is similar to this: "I move that the question be postponed to 3 P.M."

(3) If it is desired to postpone the question until after a certain event, when it shall immediately come up, the form is, "To postpone the question until after the address on Economics."

(4) If the object is to insure its not being crowded out by other matters there should be added to the motion to postpone as given in the first two cases above, the words, "and be made a special order." Or the motion may be made thus: "I move that the question be postponed and made a special order for the next meeting [or, for 3 P.M. tomorrow]." The motion in this form requires a two-thirds vote, as it suspends the rules that may interfere with its consideration at the time specified as explained under Orders of the Day [20].

(5) If it is desired to postpone a question to an adjourned meeting and devote the entire time, if necessary, to its consideration, as in case of revising by-laws, after providing for the adjourned meeting the motion should be made in this form: "I move that the question be postponed and made the special order for next Tuesday evening." Or, a question may be postponed and made the special order for the next regular meeting.

The Effect of postponing a question is to make it an order of the day for the time to which it was postponed, and if it is not then disposed of, it becomes unfinished business. Postponing a question to a certain hour does not make it a special order unless so specified in the motion. The motion to postpone definitely may be amended by a majority vote so as to make the amended motion one to make the question a special order. If this is done the amended motion will require a two-thirds vote. [Orders of the Day, 20, should be read in connection with this section.]

Footnotes

¹ In Congress the form of this motion is to postpone to a day certain, unless it is proposed to make the question a special order for a certain hour, when the hour is specified.



² In Congress a motion cannot be postponed to the next session, but it is customary in ordinary societies.



ITEM 32 | COMMIT OR REFER, OR RECOMMIT

(All the rules in regard to this motion, except where stated to the contrary, apply equally to the motions to Go into Committee of the Whole, to Consider Informally, and to Recommit as it is called when a question is committed a second time.) This motion takes precedence of the motions to amend and to postpone indefinitely, and yields to all the other subsidiary [12] motions and to all privileged [14] and incidental [13] motions. It cannot be applied to any subsidiary motion, nor can it be laid on the table or postponed except in connection with the main question. The previous question, and motions to limit or extend the limits of debate, and to amend, may be applied, to it without affecting the main question. It is debatable but only as to the propriety of committing the main question.¹ If the motion to postpone indefinitely is pending when a question is referred to a committee, it is lost, and is not referred to the committee. Pending amendments go with the main motion to the committee. The motion to commit may be reconsidered, but after the committee has begun the consideration of the question referred to it, it is too late to move to reconsider the vote to commit. The committee may, however, then be discharged as shown below.

The motion to commit (that is, to refer to a committee) may vary in form all the way from the simple form of, "That the question be referred to a committee," to the complete form of referring to question "to a committee of five to be appointed by the chair, with instructions to report resolutions properly covering the case, at the next regular business meeting." If the motion is made in the complete form the details may be changed by amendments, though they are usually treated not as ordinary amendments, but as in filling blanks [33:14].

If the motion is made in the simple form of merely referring the pending question to a committee there are three courses that may be pursued in completing the details, the one to be chosen depending upon the circumstances of the case. (1) The simple, or skeleton, motion may be completed by moving amendments, or making suggestions, for adding the required details as stated below. (2) The chair on his own initiative may call for suggestions to complete the motion, first inquiring as to what committee the question shall be referred, and continuing in the order shown hereafter. (3) The motion in its simplest form may be put to vote at once by its enemies' ordering the previous question, and where the motion to commit is almost certain to be lost this is sometimes

done to save the time that would be uselessly spent in completing the details. If it should happen that the motion to commit is adopted, which is improbable, then the details are completed before any new business, except privileged matters, can be taken up. These details are taken up in the order given below, the chair calling for the several items much as if he were completing the motion before it was voted on.

In completing a motion simply to refer to a committee, the first question the chair asks is, "To what committee shall the question be referred?" If different ones are suggested, the suggestions are not treated as amendments of those previously offered, but are voted on in the following order until one receives a majority vote: Committee of the whole; as if in committee of the whole; consider informally; standing committee, in the order in which they are proposed; special (select) committee (largest number voted on first). If the question has already been before a standing or special committee the motion becomes the motion to recommit, and the committees would be voted on in the above order except the old committee would precede other standing and select committees. In suggesting or moving that the committee be a special one, the word "special" is not generally used, the motion being made to refer the question to a committee of five, or any other number, which makes it a special committee; that is, not a standing committee. If any committee except a special one is decided upon, the chair should then put the question on referring the question to that committee. But any one may interrupt him and move to add instructions, or he, himself, may suggest them, or instructions may be given after the vote has been taken on committing the question. Instructions may be given to the committee by a majority vote at any time before it submits its report, even at another session.

If the committee is to be a special one, it is necessary in addition to its number to decide how it is to be appointed. If different methods are suggested, or moved, they are voted on in the following order: Ballot; nominations from the floor (or open nominations); nominations by the chair; and lastly, appointment by the chair, the method that should usually be adopted in very large assemblies. When this is decided the completed motion to commit is put to vote. Instructions as heretofore stated may be added before the vote is taken on the motion to commit, or they may be given afterwards. If the motion to commit is adopted, no new business, except privileged matters, can intervene until the appointment of the committee by the method prescribed, except that when the chair appoints the



committee he may wish time to make his selections, which, however, must be announced to the assembly.

If nominations are made from the floor no one can nominate more than one, if objection is made. The member making a nomination in a large assembly rises, and, addressing the chair without waiting to be recognized, says, "I nominate Mr. A." In small assemblies the nominations for committees are frequently made by members from their seats suggesting names. The chair repeats each name as he hears it, and if no more than the prescribed number is suggested, he puts the question on the members named constituting the committee. If more names than the prescribed number are suggested, the chair puts the question on each name in succession, beginning with the first named, until enough are chosen to fill the committee. The negative must be put as well as the affirmative, a majority vote being required for each member of the committee. If the committee is nominated by the chair he states the question thus: "The question is, 'Shall these members constitute the committee?'" It is now in order to move to strike out any of the names, and if such a motion is adopted the chair replaces them with other names. When he appoints the committee no vote is taken, but he must announce the names of the committee to the assembly, and until such announcement is made the committee cannot act. If it is desired to permit the chair to appoint a committee after adjournment, it must be authorized by a vote. The power to appoint a committee carries with it the power to appoint its chairman and to fill any vacancy that may arise in the committee. The resignation of a member of a committee should be addressed to the appointing power.

The Forms of this motion are as follows: "To refer the question to a committee;" "To recommit the resolution;" "That the subject be referred to a committee of three to be appointed by the chair, and that it report by resolution at the next meeting;" "That it be referred to a committee with power;" "That the assembly do now resolve itself into [or, go into] committee of the whole, to take under consideration," etc., specifying the subject [55]; "That the resolution be considered as if in committee of the whole" [56]; "That the resolution be considered informally" [57].

The Object of the motion to refer to a standing or special committee is usually to enable a question to be more carefully investigated and put into better shape for the assembly to consider, than can be done in the assembly itself. Where an assembly is large and has a very large amount of business it is

safer to have every main question go to a committee before final action on it is taken. A special committee to investigate and report upon a subject should consist of representative members on both sides of the question, so that both parties in the assembly may have confidence in the report, or reports in case there is disagreement and a minority report is submitted. By care in selecting committees in ordinary assemblies, debates upon delicate and troublesome questions can be mostly confined to the committees. It is not at all necessary to appoint on the committee the member who makes the motion to refer, but it is usual, and the courteous thing to do, when he is specially interested or informed on the subject. If the appointing power does not designate a chairman of the committee, the member first named acts as such unless the committee elects its own chairman. Consequently it is very important that the first named should be an efficient person, especially in a committee for action.

Sometimes a question is referred to a committee with full power to act in the case. When the duty assigned it has been performed, it should report what it has done, and when this report has been made the committee ceases to exist. When the assembly has decided a question and appoints a committee to take certain action (such as a committee of arrangements for holding a public meeting), then the committee should be small, and all should be favorable to the action to be taken. If any one is appointed on such a committee who is not in sympathy with the proposed action, he should say so and ask to be excused. Sometimes such a committee is given power to add to its number.

The object of going into committee of the whole, or considering a question as if in committee of the whole, or informally, is to enable the assembly to discuss a question with perfect freedom, there being no limit to the number of speeches. The first method is used in the United States House of Representatives, and the second in the United States Senate. The last one is the simplest, and is best adapted to ordinary societies that are not very large. They are explained in 55-57.

If any form of the motion to commit is made with reference to a question not pending, it becomes a main motion. Thus, a motion to go into committee of the whole on a question not pending, or to appoint a committee upon a subject not pending, or to appoint a committee to take certain action, is a main motion.

To Discharge a Committee. When a committee has made its final report and it has been received by the assembly, the committee

ceases to exist without any motion being made to that effect. If, for any reason, the assembly wishes to take a question out of the hands of a committee, and it is too late to reconsider the vote on the committal, it is necessary to "discharge the committee from further consideration" of the resolution or other matter referred to it, for as long as the matter is in the hands of the committee, the assembly cannot consider anything involving practically the same question. If the committee has not yet taken up the question referred to it, the proper motion on the day or the day after it was referred, is to reconsider the vote to commit, which requires only a majority vote. If the motion to reconsider cannot be made, a motion to discharge the committee should be made, which, if adopted, practically rescinds action taken, and therefore requires a two-thirds vote, or a vote of a majority of the membership, unless previous notice of the motion has been given, when it requires only a majority vote. When the committee is discharged its chairman returns to the secretary all papers that have been entrusted to him. It requires a motion to bring the matter referred before the assembly, and this motion may be combined with the motion to discharge, thus: "I move that the committee to whom was referred the resolution on immigration be discharged, and that the resolution be now taken up for consideration [or, be considered at some other specified time]."²

Footnotes

¹ Congress has changed its rule in regard to the motion to commit, so that now it is undebatable, instead of being debatable and opening to debate the merits of the main question. In a body like Congress, where nearly all the business must be attended to in committees, debate on referring a proposition to a committee should not be allowed. Members can appear before the committee and present their views. But in an ordinary deliberative assembly it is better to observe the general principles governing the debatability of motion as laid down in [45], and allow of debate as to the propriety of referring the question to a committee.

² In H.R. Rule 27 is the following: "4. Any member may present to the clerk a motion in writing to discharge a committee from further consideration of any public bill or joint resolution which may have been referred to such committee fifteen days prior thereto. All such motions shall be entered in the Journal and printed on a calendar to be known as a 'Calendar of Motions to Discharge Committees.' ... When such motions shall be called up ... debate on such motion shall be limited to twenty minutes, one-half thereof in favor of the proposition and one-half in opposition thereto. Such motions shall have precedence over motions to suspend the rules and shall require for adoption an affirmative vote of a majority of the membership of the House."



ITEM 33 | AMEND

To Amend takes precedence of the motion to postpone indefinitely, and yields to all other subsidiary [12] motions and to all privileged [14] and incidental [13] motions, except the motion to divide the question. It can be applied to all motions except those in the List of Motions that Cannot be Amended [33:12]. It can be amended itself, but this "amendment of an amendment" (an amendment of the second degree) cannot be amended. The previous question and motions to limit or extend the limits of debate may be applied to an amendment, or to only an amendment of an amendment, and in such case they do not affect the main question, unless so specified. An amendment is debatable in all cases except where the motion to be amended is undebatable. An amendment of a pending question requires only a majority vote for its adoption, even though the question to be amended requires a two-thirds vote. An amendment of a constitution or by-laws, or rules of order, or order of business, previously adopted, requires a two-thirds vote; but an amendment of that amendment requires only a majority vote. When a motion or resolution is under consideration only one amendment of the first degree is permitted at a time, and one amendment of that amendment -- that is, an amendment of the second degree is allowed also. An amendment of the third degree would be too complicated and is not in order.¹ Instead of making it, a member may say that if the amendment of the amendment is voted down, he will offer such and such an amendment of the amendment. While there can be only one amendment of each degree pending at the same time, any number of them may be offered in succession. An amendment must be germane² to the subject to be amended -- that is, it must relate to it, as shown further on. So an amendment to an amendment must be germane to the latter.

Form. An amendment may be in any of the following forms: (a) to insert or add (that is, place at the end); (b) to strike out; (c) to strike out and insert, or to substitute, as it is called, when an entire paragraph or resolution is struck out and another is inserted. The third form is a combination of the other two and cannot be divided, though, as shown hereafter, for the purposes of amendment the two motions are treated separately, the words to be struck out being first amended and then the words to be inserted. No amendment is in order the effect of which is to convert one of these forms into another.

The motion to amend is made in a form similar to this: "I move to amend the resolution by inserting the word 'very' before the word



'good;" or, it may be reduced to a form as simple as this: "I move to insert 'very' before 'good.'" The motion to insert should always specify the word before or after which the insertion is to be made. The motion to strike out should also locate the word, provided it occurs more than once. When the chair states the question on the amendment he should repeat the motion in detail so that all may understand what modification is proposed. Unless the effect of the amendment is very evident, he should, in putting the question, show clearly the effect of its adoption, even though it requires the reading of the entire resolution, and then the words to be inserted, or struck out, or struck out and inserted, and finally the resolution as it will stand if the amendment is adopted. He then says, "As many as are in favor of the amendment [or, of striking out, etc., or of inserting, etc.] say aye; those opposed, say no. The ayes have it, the amendment is adopted, and the question is on the resolution as amended, which is, 'Resolved, That,"' etc., reading the resolution as amended. If the vote is taken by show of hands or by rising, the question is put and the vote announced thus: "As many as are in favor of the amendment will rise [or, will raise the right hand]; those opposed will rise [or, will manifest it in the same way]. The affirmative has it and the amendment is adopted. The question is on the resolution," etc. The instant the amendment is voted on, whether it is adopted or lost, the chair should announce the result of the vote and state the question that is then before the assembly.

To Insert or Add Words. When a motion to insert [or add] certain words is made, the words to be inserted should be perfected by amendments proposed by their friends before the vote is taken on inserting or adding them. After words have been inserted or added, they cannot be changed or struck out except by a motion to strike out the paragraph, or such a portion of it as shall make the question an entirely different one from that of inserting the particular words; or by combining such a motion to strike out the paragraph or a portion of it with the motion to insert other words. The principle involved is that when the assembly has voted that certain words shall form a part of a resolution, it is not in order to make another motion that involves exactly the same question as the one it has decided. The only way to bring it up again is to move to reconsider [36] the vote by which the words were inserted. If the motion to insert is lost, it does not preclude any other motion to insert these words together with other words, or in place of other words, provided the new motion presents essentially new question to the assembly.

To Strike out Words. The motion to strike out certain words can be applied only to consecutive words, though, as the result of amendments, the words may be separated when the final vote is taken. If it is desired to strike out separated words, it is necessary to strike out the separated words by separate motions, or still better, a motion may be made to strike out the entire clause or sentence containing the words to be struck out and insert a new clause or sentence as desired. The motion to strike out certain words may be amended only by striking out words from the amendment, the effect of which is to retain in the resolution the words struck out of the amendment provided both motions are adopted. If the motion to strike out certain words is adopted, the same words cannot be again inserted unless the place or the wording is so changed as to make a new proposition. If the motion to strike out fails,³ it does not preclude a motion to strike out the same words and insert other words, or to strike out a part of the words, or to strike out a part and insert other words; or to strike out these words with others, or to do this and insert other words. In each of these cases the new question is materially different from the old one. For striking out all, or a part, of something that has been previously adopted, see "Rescind, etc." [37].

To Strike Out and Insert Words is a combination of the two preceding motions, and is indivisible.³ For purposes of amendment it is resolved into its constituent elements, and the words to be struck out are first amended, after which the words to be inserted are amended. After their amendment the question is put on the motion to strike out and insert. If it is adopted, the inserted words cannot be struck out, nor can the words struck out be inserted, unless the words or place are so changed as to make the question a new one, as described above. If the motion is lost, it does not preclude either of the single motions to strike out or to insert the same words, nor another motion to strike out and insert, provided there is any material change in either the words to be struck out or the words to be inserted, so that the questions are not practically identical. When it is desired to strike out or modify separated words, a motion may be made to strike out so much of the resolution as is necessary to include all the words to be struck out or changed, and to insert the desired revision including these words. If the words are inserted in the place previously occupied by the words struck out, they may differ materially from the latter, provided they are germane to it. If the words are to be inserted at a different place, then they must not differ materially from those struck out, as it must be in the nature of



a transfer The combined motion to strike out words in one place and to insert different words in another place is not in order. Either the place or the words must be substantially the same. If there are several changes to be made, it is usually better to rewrite the paragraph and offer it as a substitute, as shown further on.

Amendments Affecting an Entire Paragraph. A motion to insert (or add) or to strike out a paragraph, or to substitute one paragraph for another, is an amendment of the first degree, and therefore cannot be made when an amendment is pending. The friends of the paragraph to be inserted or struck out should put it in the best possible shape by amending it before it is voted on. After a paragraph has been inserted it cannot be amended except by adding to it; and it cannot be struck out except in connection with other paragraphs so as to make the question essentially a new one. If a paragraph is struck out, it cannot be inserted afterwards unless it is so changed in wording or place as to present an essentially new question. If the motion to insert or to strike out a paragraph is lost, it does not preclude any other motion except one that presents essentially the same question as the one that the assembly has already decided, as shown above in the case of amending words of a paragraph. Thus, when a motion to insert a paragraph has been lost, it is in order to move to insert a part of the paragraph or the entire paragraph if materially altered. So, though the assembly has refused to strike out a paragraph, it is in order to strike out a part of the paragraph or otherwise to amend it, though it is safer for its friends to make it as nearly perfect as possible before the vote is taken on striking it out, with a view to defeating that motion.

A motion to substitute one paragraph for another (which is a combination of the two preceding motions) after being stated by the chair is resolved into its two elements for the purpose of amendment, the chair at first entertaining amendments only to the paragraph to be struck out, these amendments being of the second degree. After it is perfected by its friends, the chair asks if there are any amendments proposed to the paragraph to be inserted. When both paragraphs have been perfected by amendments the question is put on substituting one paragraph for the other. Even though the paragraph constitutes the entire resolution and the motion to substitute is carried, it is necessary afterwards to vote on adopting the resolution, as it has only been voted to substitute one paragraph for another. A paragraph that has been substituted for another cannot be amended afterwards, except by adding to it,



like any other paragraph that has been inserted. The paragraph that has been replaced cannot be again inserted unless so modified as to constitute a new question, as with any paragraph that has been struck out. If the motion to substitute is lost, the assembly has only decided that that particular paragraph shall not replace the one specified. It may be willing that it replace some other paragraph, or that it be inserted, or that the paragraph retained in the resolution be further amended, or even struck out. But no amendment is in order that presents to the assembly practically a question that it has already decided.

In parliamentary language it is not correct to speak of "substituting" one word or part of a paragraph for another, as the term is applied to nothing less than a paragraph. When a question is being considered by section, it is in order to move a substitute for the pending section. A substitute for the entire resolution, or report, cannot be moved until the sections have all been considered and the chair has announced that the entire paper is open to amendment. When a resolution with amendments of the first and second degree pending, is referred to a committee, they may report it back with a substitute for the resolution which they recommend, even though two amendments are pending. In such a case the chair states the question first on the amendments that were pending when the resolution was committed. When they are disposed of, he states the question on the substitute recommended by the committee and proceeds as in case of any other substitute motion.

Improper Amendments. An amendment is not in order which is not germane to the question to be amended; or merely makes the affirmative of the amended question equivalent to the negative of the original question; or is identical with a question previously decided by the assembly during that session; or changes one form of amendment to another form; or substitutes one form of motion for another form; or strikes out the word Resolved from a resolution; or strikes out or inserts words which would leave no rational proposition before the assembly; or is frivolous or absurd. An amendment of an amendment must be germane to -- that is, must relate to -- the subject of the amendment as well as the main motion. No independent new question can be introduced under cover of an amendment. But an amendment may be in conflict with the spirit of the original motion and still be germane, and therefore in order.

Illustrations: A resolution of censure may be amended by striking out the word "censure" and inserting the word "thanks," for both



relate to opinion of certain conduct; refusing to censure is not the same as expressing thanks. A resolution to purchase some books could not be amended by striking out the words relating to books and inserting words relating to a building. Suppose a resolution pending directing the treasurer to purchase a desk for the secretary, and an amendment is offered to add the words, "and to pay the expenses of the delegates to the State Convention;" such an amendment is not germane to the resolution, as paying the expenses of the delegates is in no way related to purchasing a desk for the secretary, and is therefore out of order. But if an amendment were offered to insert the words "and a permanent record book" after the word "desk," it would be in order, because both are articles to enable the secretary to perform his duties. If a resolution were pending condemning certain things, it could be amended by adding other things that were similar or in some way related to them. Suppose a resolution commending A and B for heroism is pending; if the acts of heroism were not connected, amendments are in order adding other names for other acts of heroism; but if the commendation is for an act of heroism in which A and B were joined, then no names can be added to the resolution unless the parties were connected with A and B in that act. Suppose the following resolution pending: "Resolved, That the Secretary be instructed to notify our representative in Congress that we do approve of his course in regard to the tariff." A motion to amend by inserting not after the word be would be out of order, because an affirmative vote on "not instructing" is identical in effect with a negative vote on "instructing." But the motion to insert the word not after do is in order, for an affirmative vote on disapproving of a certain course is not the same as a negative vote on a resolution of approval, as the latter may mean nothing but an unwillingness to express an opinion on the subject. If a resolution is pending and a member makes the motion, "I move to strike out the words 'pine benches' and insert the words 'oak chairs,'" it is an amendment of the first degree, and no other amendment of that degree is in order until this is acted upon. All the words in italics are necessary for this form of motion, and are not subject to amendment. The only amendments in order are those that change the words "pine benches" or "oak chairs" -- that is, first those to be struck out, and when they are perfected, then those to be inserted. Suppose the motion to "strike out 'pine'" is pending, and it is moved to amend by adding "and insert 'oak.'" This motion is out of order, as it changes one form of amendment to another form. It is not in order to move to strike out the word "adopt" in a motion and insert the word "reject," as



"adopt" is a formal word necessary to show the kind of motion made. Practically, however, the same result may be attained by moving to postpone indefinitely -- that is, to reject, the main question. The chair should never rule an amendment out of order unless he is perfectly sure that it is so. If he is in doubt he should admit the amendment, or submit the question as to its being in order to the assembly as described in 21.

Every original main motion may be amended. All others may be amended, except those contained in the following list of

Motions That Cannot Be Amended.

To adjourn (except when it is qualified, or when made in an assembly with no provision for a future meeting)	17
Call for the orders of the day	20
Question of order, and appeal	21
To object to consideration of a question	23
Call for a division of the assembly	25
To grant leave to withdraw a motion	27
To grant leave to speak after indecorum	21
A request of any kind	27
To take up a question out of its proper order	22
To suspend the rules	22
To lay on the table	28
To take from the table	35
To reconsider	36
The previous question	29
To postpone indefinitely	34
To amend an amendment	33



To fill a blank	33
A nomination	66

A motion to adopt a resolution or a by-law may be amended by adding, "and that it be printed and that members be supplied with copies," or, "that they go into effect at the close of this annual meeting," or anything of a similar kind. Under each of the privileged, incidental, and subsidiary motions, it is stated whether or not the motion may be amended, and, when necessary, the way in which it may be amended is explained. An amendment to anything already adopted is not a subsidiary motion. The matter to be amended is not pending and is therefore not affected by anything done with the amendment, provided it is not adopted. Such an amendment is a main motion subject to amendments of the first and second degrees. If the motion is to strike out an entire resolution that has been adopted, it is usually called to Rescind and is explained under that head [37]. If the motion is to amend a by-law, etc., it will be found under Amendments of Constitutions, By-laws, etc. [68]. Minutes are usually amended (corrected) informally, the chair directing the correction to be made when suggested. But if objection is made, a formal vote is necessary for the amendment. The minutes may be corrected whenever the error is noticed regardless of the time which has elapsed; but after their adoption, when too late to reconsider the vote, they require a two-thirds vote for their amendment, unless previous notice of the proposed amendment has been given, when only a majority vote is required for its adoption, the same as with the motion to rescind [37]. This is necessary for the protection of the records, which otherwise would be subject to the risk of being tampered with by temporary majorities. The numbers prefixed to paragraphs, articles, etc., are only marginal indications and should be corrected by the secretary, if necessary, without any motion to amend. For amending a long paper, such as a series of resolutions, or a set of by-laws, which should be considered and amended by paragraph, see 24.

Filling Blanks.⁴ Propositions for filling blanks are treated somewhat differently from other amendments, in that any number of members may propose, without a second, different names or numbers for filling the blanks, no one proposing more than one name or number for each place, unless by general consent. These are treated not as amendments, one of another, but as independent propositions

to be voted on successively. If the blank is to be filled with a name, the chair repeats the names as they are proposed so all may hear them, and finally takes a vote on each name, beginning with the first proposed, until one receives a majority vote. If the blank is to be filled with several names and no more names are suggested than required, the names may be inserted without a vote. If more names than required are suggested, a vote is taken on each, beginning with the first, until enough to fill the blank have received a majority vote. If the number of names is not specified, a vote is taken on each name suggested, and all that receive a majority vote are inserted.

If the blank is to be filled with a number or a date, then the largest sum, or the longest time, or the most distant date, is put first, unless it is evident to the chair that the reverse order is necessary to enable the first vote to be taken on the proposition that is least likely to be adopted. Suppose a committee is being instructed to purchase a building for a blank amount: the voting on filling the blank should begin with the largest sum proposed; if that is lost, all who voted for it, and some others, would favor the next largest sum, so that the vote would be greater, and so on down to the largest sum that is favored by a majority. If the voting began with the smallest sum, every one would be willing to pay that amount, and it might be adopted and thus cut off voting on the other propositions, whereas a majority would prefer authorizing the committee to spend a larger amount. On the other hand, suppose the committee was being authorized to sell a building for a blank amount: here it is evident that there would be more in favor of the large sum than of the small one. So to get at the wish of the assembly the voting should begin with the smallest sum proposed; all who are willing to sell for that amount, and some additional ones, will be willing to sell for the next larger sum; and so the smallest sum for which the majority is willing to sell will be gradually reached.

It is sometimes convenient to create a blank, as in the following example: A resolution is pending requesting the proper authorities to prohibit the erection of wooden buildings north of A street, and an amendment to strike out A and insert B, and an amendment of the second degree to strike out B and insert C, have been made. The debate developing the fact that several other streets have their advocates, the best course is for the chair to state that, if there is no objection, the motion would be treated as having a blank for the name of the street, and that A, B, and C have been proposed for filling the blank. In this way other names could be



suggested and they would be voted on successively beginning with the one that made the prohibited area the largest, and continuing down until one was reached that could get a majority in its favor. If objection is made to leaving a blank for the name, the chair may put the question without waiting for a motion, or any one may move, as an incidental motion, that a blank be created for the name of the street. This motion is undebatable, and cannot be amended, but it may be moved to fill the blank by ballot or in any other way.

The blanks in a resolution should be filled usually before voting on the resolution. But sometimes, when a large majority is opposed to the resolution, the previous question is ordered without waiting for the blanks to be filled, thus stopping debate and further amendment, and bringing the assembly at once to a vote on the resolution. Under such circumstances the resolution would usually be rejected. But should it be adopted, it would be necessary to fill the blanks in the skeleton resolution before any other than privileged business would be in order.

The method adopted in filling blanks has sometimes a great advantage over ordinary amendment. In amending, the last one proposed is the first one voted on, whereas in filling blanks the first one proposed, or nominated, is voted on first, except where, from the nature of the case, another order is preferable, and then that order is adopted as explained above.

Nominations are treated like filling blanks; any number may be pending at the same time, not as amendments of each other, but as independent propositions to be voted on in the order in which they were made until one receives a majority vote. [See 66.]

Footnotes

¹ A substitute may be reported by a committee while amendments of the first and second degree are pending as shown in 54(4)(e). In Congress it has been found best to allow a substitute and an amendment thereto while two amendments are pending. The House rule as to amendments is as follows: "When a motion or proposition is under consideration a motion to amend and a motion to amend that amendment shall be in order, and it shall also be in order to offer a further amendment by way of substitute, to which one amendment may be offered, but which shall not be voted on until the original matter is perfected; but either may be withdrawn before amendment or decision is had thereon. Amendments to the title of a bill or resolution shall not be in order until after its passage, and shall be decided without debate." H. R. Rule 19.

² "... No motion or proposition on a subject different from that under consideration shall be admitted under color of amendment." H. R. Rule 16, §7.



³ "A motion to strike out and insert is indivisible, but a motion to strike out being lost shall neither preclude amendment nor motion to strike out and insert: ... H.R. Rule 16, §7.

⁴ While Congress has no rule on filling blanks except the common parliamentary law as laid down in Jefferson's Manual, it rarely makes use of this law, but avails itself of its rule which allows of four amendments pending at the same time, namely, amendments of the first and second degree, and a substitute and amendment to it.



ITEM 34 | POSTPONE INDEFINITELY

To Postpone Indefinitely takes precedence of nothing except the main motion to which it is applied, and yields to all privileged [14], incidental [13], and other subsidiary [12] motions. It cannot be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it except the previous question and motions limiting or extending the limits of debate. It is debatable and opens the main question to debate. It can be applied to nothing but main questions, which include questions of privilege and orders of the day after they are before the assembly for consideration. An affirmative vote on it may be reconsidered, but not a negative vote. If lost it cannot be renewed. It is simply a motion to reject the main question. If a main motion is referred to a committee while to postpone indefinitely is pending, the latter motion is ignored and does not go to the committee.

The Object of this motion is not to postpone, but to reject, the main motion without incurring the risk of a direct vote on it, and it is made only by the enemies of the main motion when they are in doubt as to their being in the majority.

The Effect of making this motion is to enable members who have exhausted their right of debate on the main question, to speak again, as technically, the question before the assembly is different, while, as far as the subject of discussion is concerned, there is no difference caused by changing the question from adopting to rejecting the measure, because the merits of the main question are open to debate in either case. If adopted, its effect is to suppress the main motion for that session, unless the vote is reconsidered. As this motion does not suppress the debate on the main question, its only useful effect is to give the opponents of the pending measure a chance of killing the main motion without risking its adoption in case of failure. For, if they carry the indefinite postponement, the main question is suppressed for the session; if they fail, they still have a vote on the main question, and, having learned their strength by the vote taken, they can form an opinion of the advisability of continuing the struggle.

APPENDIX



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