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INTRODUCTION

PARLIAMENTARY LAW.

Parliamentary Law refers originally to the customs and rules of conducting business in the English Parliament; and thence to the customs and rules of our own legislative assemblies. In England these customs and usages of Parliament form a part of the unwritten law of the land, and in our own legislative bodies they are of authority in all cases where they do not conflict with existing rules or precedents.

But as a people we have not the respect which the English have for customs and precedents, and are always ready for innovations which we think are improvements, and hence changes have been and are being constantly made in the written rules which our legislative bodies have found best to adopt. As each house adopts its own rules, it results that the two houses of the same legislature do not always agree in their practice; even in Congress the order of precedence of motions is not the same in both houses, and the Previous Question is admitted in the House of Representatives, but not in the Senate. As a consequence of this, the exact method of conducting business in any particular legislative body is to be obtained only from the Legislative Manual of that body.

The vast number of societies, political, literary, scientific, benevolent and religious, formed all over the land, though not legislative, are still deliberative in their character, and must have some system of conducting business, and some rules to govern their proceedings, and are necessarily subject to the common parliamentary law where it does not conflict with their own special rules. But as their knowledge of parliamentary law has been obtained from the usages in this country, rather than from the customs of Parliament, it has resulted that these societies have

followed the customs of our own legislative bodies, and our people have thus been educated under a system of parliamentary law which is peculiar to this country, and yet so well established as to supersede the English parliamentary law as the common law of ordinary deliberative assemblies.

The practice of the National House of Representatives should have the same force in this country as the usages of the House of Commons have in England, in determining the general principles of the common parliamentary law of the land; but it does not follow that in every matter of detail the rules of Congress can be appealed to as the common law governing every deliberative assembly. In these matters of detail, the rules of each House of Congress are adapted to their own peculiar wants, and are of no force whatever in other assemblies.

But upon all great parliamentary questions, such as what motions can be made, what is their order of precedence, which can be debated, what is their effect, etc., the common law of the land is settled by the practice of the U.S. House of Representatives, and not by that of the English Parliament, the U.S. Senate, or any other body.

While in extreme cases there is no difficulty in deciding the question as to whether the practice of Congress determines the common parliamentary law, yet between these extremes there must necessarily be a large number of doubtful cases upon which there would be great difference of opinion, and to avoid the serious difficulties always arising from a lack of definiteness in the law, every deliberative assembly should imitate our legislative bodies in adopting Rules of Order for the conduct of their business.*

*Where the practice of Congress differs from that of Parliament upon a material point, the common law of this country follows the practice of Congress. Thus in every American deliberative assembly having no rules for conducting business, the motion to adjourn would be decided to be undebatable, as in Congress, the English parliamentary law to the contrary notwithstanding; so if the Previous Question were negatived, the debate upon the subject would continue as in Congress, whereas in Parliament the subject would be immediately dismissed; so too the Previous

PLAN OF THE WORK.

This Manual is prepared to partially meet this want in deliberative assemblies that are not legislative in their character. It has been made sufficiently complete to answer for the rules of an assembly, until they see fit to adopt special rules conflicting with and superseding any of its rules of detail, such as the Order of Business [§ 44], etc. Even in matters of detail the practice of Congress is followed, wherever it is not manifestly unsuited to ordinary

Question could be moved when there was before the assembly a motion either to amend, to commit, or to postpone definitely or indefinitely, just as in Congress, notwithstanding that, according to English parliamentary law, the Previous Question could not be moved under such circumstances.

When the rules of the two Houses of Congress conflict, the H.R. rules are of greater authority than those of the Senate in determining the parliamentary law of the country, just as the practice of the House of Commons, and not the House of Lords, determines the parliamentary law of England. For instance, though the Senate rules do not allow the motion for the Previous Question, and make the motion to postpone indefinitely take precedence of every other subsidiary motion [§ 7] except to lie on the table, yet the parliamentary law of the land follows the practice of the House of Representatives, in recognizing the Previous Question as a legitimate motion, and assigning to the very lowest rank the motion to postpone indefinitely.

But in matters of detail, the rules of the House of Representatives are adapted to the peculiar wants of that body, and are of no authority in any other assembly. No one for instance would accept the following H.R. rules as common parliamentary law in this country: That the chairman, in case of disorderly conduct, would have the power to order the galleries to be cleared; that the ballot could not be used in electing the officers of an assembly; that any fifteen members would be authorized to compel the attendance of absent members and make them pay the expenses of the messengers sent after them; that all committees not appointed by the Chair would have to be appointed by ballot, and if the required number were not elected by a majority vote, then a second ballot must be taken in which a plurality of votes would prevail; that each member would be limited in debate upon any question, to one hour; that a day's notice must be given of the introduction of a bill, and that before its passage it must be read three times, and that without the special order of the assembly it cannot be read twice the same day. These examples are sufficient to show the absurdity of the idea that the rules of Congress in all things determine the common parliamentary law.

assemblies, and in such cases, in Part I, there will be found, in a foot note, the Congressional practice. In the important matters referred to above, in which the practice of the House of Representatives settles the common parliamentary law of the country, this Manual strictly conforms to such practice.*

Part I contains a set of Rules of Order systematically arranged, as shown in the Table of Contents. Each one of the forty-five sections is complete in itself, so that no one unfamiliar with the work can be misled in examining any particular subject. Cross references are freely used to save repeating from other sections, and by this means the reader, without using the index, is referred to everything in the Rules of Order that has any bearing upon the subject he is investigating. The references are by sections, and for convenience the numbers of the sections are placed at the top of each page. The motions are arranged under the usual classes, in their order of rank, but in the index under the word motion will be found an alphabetical list of all the motions generally used. In reference to each motion there is stated:

*On account of the party lines being so strictly drawn in Congress, no such thing as harmony of action is possible, and it has been found best to give a bare majority in the House of Representatives (but not in the Senate) the power to take final action upon a question without allowing of any discussion. In ordinary societies more regard should be paid to the rights of the minority, and a two-thirds vote be required, as in this Manual [§ 39], for sustaining an objection to the introduction of a question, or for adopting a motion for the Previous Question, or for adopting an order closing or limiting debate. In this respect the policy of the Pocket Manual is a mean between those of the House and Senate. But some societies will doubtless find it advantageous to follow the practice of the H.R., and others will prefer that of the Senate. It requires a majority, according to the Pocket Manual, to order the yeas and nays, which is doubtless best in the majority of assemblies; but in all bodies in which the members are responsible to their constituents, a much smaller number should have this power. In Congress it requires but a one-fifth vote, and in some bodies a single member can require a vote to be taken by yeas and nays.

Any society adopting this Manual, should make its rules govern them in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the By-Laws and Rules of Order of the society. Their own rules should include all of the cases where it is desirable to vary from the rules in the Manual, and especially should provide for a Quorum [§ 43], and an Order of Business [§ 44], as suggested in these rules.

- (1) Of what motions *it takes precedence* (that is, what motions may, be pending, and yet it be in order to make this motion).
- (2) To what motions it *yields* (that is, what motions may be made while this motion is pending).
- (3) Whether it is *debatable* or not.
- (4) Whether it can be *amended* or not.
- (5) In case the motion can have no subsidiary motion *applied* to it, the fact is stated [see Adjourn, § 11, for an example: the meaning is, that the particular motion to adjourn, for example, cannot be laid on the table, postponed, committed or amended].
- (6) The *effect* of the motion if adopted.
- (7) The *form of stating the question* when peculiar, and whatever other information is necessary to enable one to understand the question.

Part II. While the second part covers the entire ground of the first part, it does so in a much simpler manner, being intended for those who have no acquaintance with the usages of deliberative assemblies. It also explains the method of organizing an assembly or society, and conducting a meeting. The motions are treated on an entirely different plan, being classified according to the objects for which they are used, and those of each class compared together so that the reader may obtain the best motion for the accomplishment of any given object. It omits the complications of parliamentary law, and has but few references to the rules of Congress, or those in this Manual. In order to make it complete in itself, it was necessary to repeat a few pages from the first part.

DEFINITIONS.

In addition to the terms defined above (*taking precedence of, yielding to and applying to*), there are other terms that are liable to be misunderstood, to which attention should be called.

Meeting and Session.—In this Manual the term “meeting” is used to denote an assembling together of the members of a

deliberative assembly for any length of time, during which there is no separation of the members by adjournment. An adjournment to meet again at some other time, even the same day, terminates the meeting, but not the session, which latter includes all the adjourned meetings. The next meeting, in this case, would be an “adjourned meeting” of the same session.

A “meeting” of an assembly is terminated by a temporary adjournment; a “session” of an assembly ends with an adjournment without day, and may consist of many meetings [see Session, § 42].

Previous Question—This term is frequently understood to refer to the question previously under consideration. As used in this country it is equivalent to a motion to “Stop debate, and proceed to voting on all the questions before the assembly,” with certain exceptions, where it affects only one motion (as to postpone, to reconsider and an appeal; see § 20 for a full explanation).

Shall the Question be Considered (or discussed)? This question, which is put as soon as a subject is brought before an assembly, if any member “objects to its consideration” (or “discussion,” or “introduction”), is not intended to merely cut off debate, but to prevent the question from coming before the assembly for its action. If decided by a two-thirds vote in the negative, the question is removed from before the assembly immediately [see § 15].

Whenever the word “assembly,” which is used throughout these rules, occurs in forms of motions (as in Appeals, § 14), it is better to replace it by the special term used to designate the particular assembly; as for instance, “Society,” or “Convention,” or “Board.” The term “Congress,” when used in this Manual, refers to the House of Representatives of the U.S.

INDEX.

The figures from 1 to 45 refer to sections in Part I; those greater than 45, to sections in Part II. A complete list of motions will be found in the Index, under the title Motions, list of. The arrangement of the work can be most easily seen by examining the Table of Contents [pp. 5–9]; its plan is explained in the Introduction, pp. 13–15.

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