

# AFGE



# HOW TO RUN A LOCAL MEETING

Prepared by the Office of the General Counsel  
In conjunction with the Legal Rights Committee of the National Executive Council

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## INTRODUCTION

The practice and spirit of democracy in the labor movement depends, at least in part, on the knowledge, imagination and hard work of local union leaders in making the union meeting a really democratic and educational experience for each member. We must constantly work to make our union meetings more important and more interesting to our members.

This handbook is designed to help local leaders obtain a knowledge of democratic meeting procedures and to suggest some ideas for increasing membership interest, participation and attendance at meetings. The major portion of this handbook is devoted to the duties of local union officers and the rules of parliamentary procedure. It is designed to help union officers get the business of the meeting taken care of in an orderly, efficient manner and at the same time protect the rights of all members.

Not all union members come to union meet-

ings, even when they are well run, but there are other ways to reach union members. The AFL-CIO Department of Education and delegates from international unions and state and local central bodies spent four days discussing roadblocks which stand in the way of reaching the union member. One development was this handbook, written by the AFL-CIO and modified by AFGE for our own use. New times call for new approaches to new problems. Consider these ideas as you continue your efforts to reach your members.

If the information in this handbook is put to work, we will not only reap the benefits in our own movement, we will also increase the knowledge of democratic participation which our members and leaders will carry over into other organizations in the community to which they belong.

## 1. WHY PARLIAMENTARY LAW?

It has been said many times that democracy begins in the union meeting.

To the individual member, the measurement of democracy in the union is often just that - what goes on at the union meeting. Do I know how to get up and say what I think? Is the meeting dominated by a small bunch of long-winded characters? Do we get things done at the meeting? Is it just a clique that's running things? These are often the yardsticks the member uses to measure the union. To insure democracy and to prevent members from milling around in confusion when they come together for a meeting, a set of rules for meetings has been developed over the years.

### Where the Rules Came From

Because these rules were originally based upon the experience of British Parliament, they

are known as parliamentary law, or parliamentary procedure. We will refer to them as rules for union meetings.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the first manual of procedure for Congress. But the book most often used today is one that adapts the rules of Congress for action by deliberative bodies. Henry M. Robert's *Rules of Order* was first published in 1876. Most unions have modified *Robert's Rules* to suit their own purposes. Others have provided in their constitution or bylaws some particular rules for conducting meetings.

### Knowing the Rules

Rules for meetings enable the work of the union meeting to get done effectively and efficiently, while at the same time protecting the rights of all the members. Just as learning to play a game properly requires knowledge of the rules,

so playing a proper role in the union requires a working knowledge of the rules for union meetings.

When only the chair knows the rules, the work of the meeting suffers. When most of the body has a working knowledge of the rules, the "floor," meaning the members, actually controls the meeting and the "chair" simply directs it.

This does not mean that a member must memorize the rules in order to participate in a union meeting. No one can know everything about parliamentary procedure. Even the best parliamentarian, at times, has to rely upon good judgment and the common sense of the group. Remember that these rules are not carved in stone. So start with basic principles behind the rules and then, when in doubt, look it up or ask questions.

The basic principles behind the rules can be stated as follows:

1. Only one subject should come before the meeting at a time.
2. Each proposal coming before the meeting shall be freely debated with meaningful discussion.
3. The will of the majority is sought, but a minority has the right to present a case.
4. Each member has rights and responsibilities equal to those of every other member.
5. The desires of the membership should move along in such a way that the welfare of the organization, as a whole, is served.

## **2. WHAT MAKES A GOOD MEETING?**

The lack of attendance at many union meetings indicates that the meetings are not serving to advance the well being of all the workers. It is not enough just to go through a routine and expect to maintain peoples' interest. A union meeting can help the members develop their group interests or can be the means of developing new interests. It can help members establish common views and ideas on things that are important to all of them.

Or, a union meeting can be an endless round of dry reports, individual grievances, or a series of department or shop squabbles. It doesn't take a psychiatrist to know that listening to a grievance that only a steward can handle, and a supervisor settle, is not interesting or entertaining. It is a boring experience and members lose interest in the union meeting.

Nor should meetings attempt to be entertainment with the members as spectators. Members would rather watch TV.

More people will start coming if you have well run, interesting union meetings. Both officers and members can do something about this.

### **Quorum**

Meetings begin by determining whether or not there is a quorum. Without a quorum, the union cannot conduct business, with two exceptions. Those present may act to obtain a quorum, such as telephoning members. Also, scheduled nominations and/or elections must go forward even without a quorum. The number required to constitute a quorum is set forth in the local's bylaws, but that number is guided by the Federation's position since the 1940's that the quorum is the number of offices plus one.

### **What Officers Can Do To Improve the Meeting**

1. **Start promptly!** Establish the practice of starting on time. Give notice that the next meeting will begin promptly at 7 (or 8) o'clock. Then speak to some of the officers and members and get them to promise to be there at the appointed time. If this happens once or twice, other members will get the idea and show up on time.

2. **End on time!** It is a good rule to keep the meeting down to one-and-a-half hours. There are many things that should be handled by committees - details that should not clutter up a union meeting.

3. **Plan the meeting.** Plan to have a lively, interesting highlight as the main event for each meeting. For example, election of delegates to the District Caucus, Council, or National Convention should offer an opportunity to review the achievements of the national officers. A quiz program about the services of the union, its officers and some of its history could be prepared and run by the Education Committee.

4. **Streamline the meeting.** The routine parts of the meeting can be streamlined. Make sure reports of committees and officers are prepared in advance and are well organized and brief. Correspondence should be handled efficiently. Only in rare circumstances should "new" correspondence be read to the membership. Some letters can be handled by the officers at executive meetings and detailed to appropriate committees for action or reply.

5. **Keep the meeting moving along.** If you're the chair and the membership is shy about making motions, don't wait too long - simply say: "You have heard the report and the suggestion that this local should establish a special committee to work with Security. Do I hear a motion?" Then, again, you may have a few people who will want to talk on and on. Learn how to cut them short. Sometimes even the chair must remember not to talk too much.

6. **Consult the membership.** Maybe the local should change the time or date of the meeting. It is a good idea to let the members consider this from time to time. What was a good meeting night or time a few years ago may be very bad now.

Similarly, ask the members from time to time what they want from the meetings. Group expe-

rience and interests change. If members do not come out to meetings, they must think that nothing is going to happen that will interest them. Effective participation boils down to a question of whose union is it? Who decides what is important, the officers, or the members?

### **Checklist to Improve Union Meetings:**

1. Know something about the rules of the meeting.
2. Debate the issue, not the person who presents it.
3. Ask for information when in doubt.
4. Enter the debate when a point should be made.
5. Address the chair and get recognition before talking.
6. Talk briefly and not too frequently.
7. Assume a share of responsibility for action decided upon by the group.
8. Keep informed about the union.

Participation is the key to democratic procedure and a good union meeting. But this doesn't mean that everyone must have something to say on every issue. Meetings profit from listeners as well as speakers. If a member listens, weighs the facts and arguments, and votes, that member is making a contribution. And it is important that the listeners realize that they also are contributing to the meeting. The chair should remember this, also, and should keep the speakers from rambling all over the lot, and prevent a few speakers from dominating the debate.

In fact, a good listener can help here too. If a speaker is getting off the track, rise to a point of order and tactfully call the chair's attention to this problem.

If the listener does not understand something, a question is in order. Chances are a lot of others got lost at the same time and the question will help them. A good chair will create the atmosphere to encourage members to participate constructively at meetings.

### **3. LET'S PLAN MEETINGS**

The only way to ensure an orderly, efficient meeting is to work up an agenda beforehand.

It is the President's duty, with the help of the Executive Board, to plan the agenda for each membership meeting. They should meet a week or a few days before the membership meeting and draw up the agenda.

At such a meeting the communications to the local can be read and turned over to the committee leaders or summarized briefly for presentation to the membership. To speed up a regular meeting the Executive Board may have recommendations ready on all those letters demanding action, or the committees may plan to include the communications in their reports. It will also give leaders of the various committees something specific to report on. It is monotonous when the recording Secretary reads a long series of letters.

The Executive Board should check the minutes of the last meeting and include any "unfinished business" in its working plan. The officers should note on the agenda which committees are due to report.

But don't go off the track with this. The membership must still make the final decisions. And your union bylaws set up rules on what can, and what cannot, be taken care of by the Executive Board.

Many unions have their own Order of Business as part of their bylaws or constitution. If your union has no special Order of Business you might use the following:

- (a) Roll call of officers
- (b) Reading of the minutes of the previous meeting
- (c) Report of financial condition by Local Treasurer
- (d) Reports of committees

- (e) Unfinished business
- (f) New business
- (g) Comments for the good of the local
- (h) Adjournment

The Order of Business is just an outline. When the officers work out the agenda, they put flesh on it. Each meeting should be adjusted to meet the current needs of the local, or to develop understanding of social, economic, or political issues of the day.

The agenda is the chair's guide for timing the various items of business so that the really important things are not crowded out.

This does not mean that the chair should use the agenda as an excuse to be arbitrary. Using common sense, the chair should be able to follow through with an agenda without pushing people around.

#### **Unanimous Consent**

The chair should always keep in mind that a great deal of the business of a meeting could be accomplished by unanimous consent. So, when the minutes of the previous meeting are distributed, the chair will ask, "Are there any corrections?" And then, if none are made, "If there is no objection the minutes will stand as presented." This same procedure may operate about communications or reports. In all instances, the purpose is not to short-cut democratic procedures, but to get along to the main events in the meeting.

When there are special items of business to come before the meeting, the chair may suggest changes in the agenda, or even the omission of some items. This should not be done as a regular procedure, however, and should never be done without the consent of the meeting.

## **4. WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHAIR?**

A good chair is made, not born.

But this does not mean that a good chair is necessarily the officer who has learned all the rules of order. Such a "walking encyclopedia" is quite apt to be entangled in too many details to be completely effective.

### **What Does the Chair Have to Know?**

A good chair does need to know enough about the rules to meet the problems of procedure that may come up in the local meeting.

In addition, the chair should be familiar with both the union's constitution and bylaws and the AFGE National Constitution. This is important because the chair at times may have to rule on constitutional questions. Infringements of the union's constitution are serious matters. A local may find itself in real trouble if it violates the constitution, even inadvertently.

The chair must also understand the union's relationship to other union organizations such as the AFL-CIO and its state and local central labor bodies.

Finally, the chair must learn to be fair, impartial and courteous to everyone when chairing the meeting, much like a referee or an umpire.

### **What Does the Chair Do?**

It is up to the chair to:

1. Keep the meeting moving along.
2. See that members understand what is going on - which rules apply, and why.
3. See that there is full discussion so voting is informed.
4. Protect the minority.

It may look like a big job, and it is. But much of the skill required of the chair comes with practice. Nevertheless, here are a few tips on how to do the job and handle some of the situations that come up:

**1. Keep it moving.** Get to know the membership. Keep an eye on those two or three members who seem to attend so that they can test the rules of procedure - the "legal eagles" - or to talk to a captive audience. Do not let them tie up the meeting. Listen to all that is said. Look out for abuses of the rules. A person who rises to a "point of order" is out of order if he or she uses it as an excuse to hold forth on the motion under consideration.

Always keep the debate on the subject. Politely bring speakers back to the subject of the motion when they wander off, even if it is necessary to interrupt them. Everyone gets the idea after a while. In addition, meeting time is too precious to allow for personal exchanges between speakers. "The chair must interrupt Brother Hardy and ask him to speak on the motion before the membership and address his remarks to the chair only" - is the way to handle this. On the other hand, the chair can suggest motions to keep the meeting moving along such as "Do I hear a motion to adopt the report of the Legislative Committee?"

**2. Help Members Know What's Going On.** Parliamentary rules can be very complicated to many members. Particularly when there is extended debate or when amendments come up, people often lose track of what they are voting on. From time to time repeat the question before the membership. If people seem confused about what they are going to vote on, then repeat the motion. If it is an amendment, then make it clear what the amendment says and means. A good chair can also help a member who is having difficulty making a point. The chair can help word the motion or point out how the member may accomplish the purpose under the rules. For example: "Sister Thomas is suggesting we set up our own local Committee on Political Education. It is out of order here. I suggest she put this in the form of a motion when we come to New Business, which is the next item on our agenda after we dispose of our committee reports."



**3. Promote Full Discussion and Informed Voting.** Ask long-winded speakers to shorten their remarks. "Brother Smith, you have already stated your main arguments on this motion, and the chair would like to request that you conclude your remarks to allow time for others to speak on the motion" is in order if a man is droning on and on. Note those who want to speak on a motion. Recognize the first person who asked for the floor, but indicate to the others who will be next. The Secretary can help by keeping a running list of those to be recognized. Five minutes for each speaker on a motion is a good "cut-off" time.

Always repeat the motion being voted on before a vote is actually taken.

**4. Protect the Minority.** Be in a position to know who is for or against certain motions. Then give them the floor alternately. If you are not sure, then it's proper to say, "We have just heard someone 'for' the motion. The chair will now recognize a speaker 'against' the motion. Sister Jones are you 'for' or 'against?'" Never let an unpopular or minority viewpoint be shouted down. Point out that they all can record their opinion when it comes to the vote but everyone has a right to state his or her views during the debate.

At times the chair is called upon to introduce an outside speaker. This is not the occasion for the chair to make a speech. It is enough to give the name of the speaker, title, and qualifications,

the subject, and even indicate how much time has been allocated for this part of the program. Better yet, spread the limelight by having the appropriate committee chair make the introduction.

These are only a few of the situations a chair runs into.

There are thousands of local union members who chair meetings across the country. Not every one of them knows all the rules, faces the same situations, or conducts a meeting in exactly the same way. But a good chair learns willingly and constantly tries to improve as a chair and leader.

The point of this chapter has been summed up very well in this statement from a handbook of rules published by a union in Canada:

"A democratically minded chair, well versed in the rules of order, tolerant, patient, and impartial and, above all, possessing a liberal supply of good sense, is more of a safeguard for an orderly meeting than a library of parliamentary law ... . It is more important for a chair and the members of an organization to get the spirit of democratic procedure than to observe the letter of the law. The will for order may often obtain order and progress in a meeting even if errors are made in the use of rules. It is, however, best to be conversant with the rules in order that meetings may be orderly."

## **5. THE RECORDING SECRETARY**

There are three parts to the Secretary's job: taking minutes of the meeting, preparing them for presentation, and handling correspondence. The Secretary also can be an important aid to the chair during the meeting by helping to follow the agenda and reading back accurately worded motions when needed.

Endless reading of long, dull correspondence has deadened many a meeting from the outset. With a little practice, the Secretary can learn to look over correspondence before the meeting and summarize rather than read the less important

letters.

The minutes should include:

1. Time and place of meeting;
2. Statement that notice was duly sent and the meeting duly called;
3. Names of the presiding officer, Secretary, and other officers present;
4. Quorum statistics;
5. Correction and approval of minutes of the previous meeting;
6. Presentation of the Treasurer's report and that it became a part of the record;
7. Short summaries of officers' and committees' reports and any actions taken thereon;
8. Record of business transacted at the

present meeting, including resolutions or motions proposed and the disposition thereof. Include the name of the maker of the motion. It is not required to record the seconder of the motion or the record of the vote. The debate is not recorded. The words must describe the action clearly, but should not include the discussion nor reflect the personal opinion of the Secretary or any other officer. They should be an impartial,

accurate record of the action taken by the meeting. Unfinished business is recorded before new business. **9.** Announcements; **10.** Time of adjournment; and **11.** Signature of the Secretary.

No one expects a local union Secretary to take shorthand or speedwriting. The experienced Secretary takes rough notes of the action at a meeting and then rewords the notes for the record. Cut the minutes to the bare details.

## **6. THE LOCAL TREASURER**

One important part of this union job is reporting to the membership on the union's finances. Senate investigations have uncovered some cases where officers were spending money without members being aware of it. The public, and even some members, have been sold the idea that union members do not get reports of what happens to their money. In order to insure proper accounting of union funds, AFGE's Financial Officers Manual contains a list of minimum accounting and financial controls for financial officers of affiliates to follow.

It is the Treasurer's job to make sure that as broad a range of members as possible sees and understands the union's finances. Expenditures should be read and approved at each meeting, and a full financial statement presented to the membership meeting at least once a year. However, financial statements are not easy to understand and can be dry and boring. It is good to explain the complicated items to the member-

ship. Members can understand better if they have a copy of the statement in front of them. Some locals distribute their yearly statement or print it in their local union paper if they have one. Short of this, writing it up on a blackboard can help the membership understand the items being read off by the Secretary. Try your financial report with visual aides. Some imaginative financial secretaries have used the occasion of the yearly financial report to plan a program with the Education Committee on "How Your Dues Were Spent This Year."

The Treasurer, of course, is responsible for keeping accurate records of the local's finances. These records are required by the Department of Labor and AFGE National Constitution.

Guarding the funds of a local is fundamental to good trade unionism. The Treasurer is the essential person for this job along with the local's trustees or Audit Committee.

## **7. COMMITTEES AND THEIR REPORTS**

It is impossible for a local to carry on all its work at the regular meetings. There must be preliminary planning and work before each membership meeting. Some problems need action between meetings. Other things do not deserve the attention of the whole meeting and yet must be done. These are the reasons why good, functioning committees are so important.

But, in addition, the more people actively

serving on committees the stronger the local. This is so because a person taking part in a particular activity becomes more interested in the union as a whole. Furthermore, with good functioning committees, a local can get a lot more done to benefit the membership. The experience of many locals also shows that good committee reports and discussion on these reports can often make the difference between an alive, interesting

meeting and a dull, boring one.

### **Types of Committees**

Every local should have a number of committees. In general, there are two types of committees: standing and special committees.

A **standing committee** is one that continues from year to year, although the people on it may change. Many unions provide in their constitutions or bylaws for certain standing committees.

The most important standing committees are the Executive Committee or Board and the Shop Stewards.

The Executive Board is responsible for local union decisions between meetings. It should help to plan the local meetings and other union activities. Specific duties are usually listed in the union's bylaws.

Other standing committees deal with special fields, such as EEO, legislation and political arrangements, membership and organizing, safety, etc.

Depending upon the procedure established in the local's constitution or bylaws, a **special committee** is appointed by the President, appointed by the Executive Board, or elected by the membership to handle a specific assignment; when that job is done the committee ceases to exist. The local might have a special committee to conduct an election, receive an outstanding guest, or to plan a dance or a picnic. Or, as often happens at a meeting, the chair may see that the membership does not have enough information to act on a new proposal or idea. It may be suggested that a special committee be appointed to get the facts and report at the next meeting. Special committees should be dismissed with thanks after their work has been finished.

### **Committees at Work**

Usually, when a committee is selected, one of its members is named chair. When this is not done, either the first named member acts as chair or the committee chooses its chair. Each committee should also select a Secretary and, if it is a

large committee, a vice chair.

Some unions place a member of the local executive board on each committee and in some cases this person serves as chair. But there is no hard rule on this. It is also common practice that the local union president is an ex-officio member of every committee, except the Audit and Election Committees.

A committee chair is responsible for steering the committee. This person sees to it that the committee meets regularly, that the committee members are notified of meetings, and that reports are made at the proper times and places. The chair does not issue decisions without a majority of the committee in favor.

One of the big advantages of committee action is its informality. In small groups, the rules of parliamentary procedure can be ignored. Members enjoy a meeting where they can take an active part easily.

This informality makes it possible for a committee to discuss a problem or suggestion thoroughly and reach a common agreement. However, the chair must keep the committee on the track. Never permit the meeting to become just a "bull session." Committees have responsibilities.

### **Preparing and Presenting Committee Reports**

The report to the local membership meeting should be made as short and interesting as possible. Usually, the chair or a particularly interested member of the committee makes the report. When they are extremely important or recommend action, it is good practice to put the reports in writing. Minutes of the Executive Board are usually submitted as the report of that committee.

An outline of a general, short committee report could include:

1. Names of the members of the committee.
2. Main activities of the committee - what the committee is doing.
3. Problems the committee is having and why; successes the committee is having and why.
4. Summary - Specific action recommended by the committee or how members could

help.

But in case you have fallen into a rut, try to think of different ways of reporting. Try a skit - hold a committee meeting up front at the union meeting, or let different members of the committee stand up and present different parts of the report. Or draw up an attractive handbill report that can be distributed at the meeting or passed out to all the local membership. Do not forget to prepare a press release for community newspapers and write it up for the local's paper.

### **Acting on Committee Reports**

The members should have an opportunity to "accept" committee reports. Such acceptance is usually done by a vote. This signifies approval of the committee's report and also adopts its recommendations.

A motion coming from a committee does not need a second. When the report of a committee includes several suggestions or recommendations for action, "acceptance" or "rejection" should be

handled one point at a time. This is especially true in cases of a constitution or bylaws committee.

Specific recommendations made by a committee may be amended by the membership before accepting them. They might raise or lower the amount to be given for a contribution, or change the date of a special event, etc.

### **Minority Reports**

When the members of a committee cannot agree on a report, the minority may oppose adoption of the report by the membership, or it may desire to submit a minority report to the membership. Ordinarily, the meeting should hear the minority report, but if there is any objection, the matter should be put to a vote without debate.

The membership should act upon the report of the majority unless a motion is passed to substitute the minority report for that of the majority. If this happens, discussion proceeds on the minority report. If this motion is defeated, then the membership acts on the majority report.

## **8. BASIC RULES OF ORDER - HOW MOTIONS GET ACTION**

The motion is the basis of all action at a membership meeting. A membership decision to take action on a problem comes with a motion. It is the keystone of all rules of order.

Without a motion, no report can be dealt with, no new business can be introduced, no discussion closed, and no meeting adjourned. Yet, in spite of its importance, a motion is a simple thing. Complications arise from the way in which discussions are handled, the kind of motion offered, and the possibility of amendments and amendments to amendments.

### **How Motions Are Made**

Briefly, the steps are: **recognition, making a motion, seconding, stating a motion, discussion, restating the motion, voting, announcing the results.**

A motion must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the right time. It must not be obstructive, frivolous, or against the bylaws.

A member desiring to present a motion rises and addresses the chair as "Mr. Chairman," or "Madam Chair." Anyone in the meeting can rise to talk, but no one has the right to talk until recognized by the chair, and has been "given the floor."

Ordinarily the chair recognizes the first member to arise, but when two or more arise at the same time, the chair must exercise judgment in making a choice. When a member has been given the floor, the rest of the group should sit and listen. The chair recognizes a member by nodding or pointing to the member or by calling out her name or position in the hall: "Sister Smith," or "The brother in the fourth row center."

When Sister Smith is recognized by the chair, she rises and offers a motion. The member should speak clearly and concisely, state the motion affirmatively (“I move that ...,” instead of “I move that we do not ...”), avoid personalities, and stay on the subject:

"Mr. Chairman, I move that Local 101 ...". She sits down. Another member rises to be recognized and seconds the motion. He does this by simply saying: "I second the motion, Mr. Chairman."

No motion can be considered until it receives a second (except incidental motions discussed below). Presumably, any proposal that cannot get a second is not worthy of discussion. In some instances, a member desiring to make a motion will ask the privilege of explaining the purpose of his motion before making it. If there is no objection from the body, the chair may allow the member to do this. In most union meetings all that is required for a motion to be seconded is for a member to call out "Second" in a loud voice, while remaining seated.

### **Stating the Question**

When the motion has been made and seconded, the chair should repeat it loudly and clearly, so that all members will know what action has been proposed. If the motion is poorly worded or confusing, the chair should reword the motion, politely, so that its meaning will be clear. If the chair believes the motion is out of order, this should be pointed out as soon as it is made.

In repeating the motion for the membership, the chair may ask the Secretary to read it.

The motion is now the property of the assembly, and the maker cannot change it without consent of the members.

### **Discussing the Motion**

When the chair has restated the motion, or has it read, discussion is in order: "A motion has been made and seconded that Local 101... . Is there any discussion?"

Members must address the chair, not each other.

The person proposing the motion is usually given the first opportunity to speak on the motion, since it is expected that the best arguments to support the motion will be made by the person who makes the motion. After this opening members speak for or against the motion as they are recognized by the chair.

It is a good practice for the chair to alternate speakers for and against a motion. No one should speak twice on a motion so long as there are others desiring to speak. A member who seldom participates should be given preference over the one who speaks frequently. A member may not speak a third time without approval of the body.

The chair may speak on a motion provided he or she leaves the "chair." No speech should be made from the chair. The chair should not dominate the meeting so that the members hesitate to state their opinions. It is best that the chair speak only when the full meaning of the motion has not been brought out by discussion, or when the matter is so very important to the well-being of the local that everyone should know where the chair stands.

In such a situation, the chair should step down to talk to a motion, and another officer should take the gavel. The chair's remarks will be better received from the floor than from the chair.

### **Amendments or a Substitute Motion?**

If debate becomes extensive, or the debate indicates the motion is unclear, the members would probably like to change the motion a little. That is the time when (a) an amendment is used or (b) a substitute motion is in order. Either may be offered at any time after a motion has been seconded and before the vote is taken.

The person wishing to move for an **amendment to a motion** must get the floor in the same manner as one speaking on the motion. And the amendment must be seconded before it can be considered.

The amendment must be stated clearly and defined as to what section of the motion it ap

plies. For example, someone may move that "the Executive Board investigate the possibility of the local sponsoring a Little League ball team." Another member may want to change this by saying, "I propose an amendment changing the words "the Executive Board" to "a special committee." Ordinarily, amendments are made to change a motion or include information that is more specific.

It must also be closely related to the subject of the motion. It cannot be used to introduce a new subject.

Once an amendment has been moved and seconded, discussion then follows on the amendment. In voting, the vote is taken first on the amendment and then the main motion. The chair says: "All those in favor of the amendment which strikes out the words ... and substitutes the words ... please indicate by the usual sign." If the amendment is defeated, another amendment is in order.

A **substitute motion** replaces the original motion. It can be directly contrary to the original motion, or can include changes or suggestions brought out in discussion or offered by amendments. It keeps the action simple and straightforward. Discussion and voting take place on the substitute motion. However, it too can be amended just as if it were an original motion.

### **Amendment to an Amendment or Substitute Motion?**

Just as it is possible to change a motion, so it is also possible to change an amendment. A member may not be satisfied with the amendment and so will attempt to improve it by moving an "amendment to the amendment." In the example above, some members may feel that the committee should be elected, and so would move "an amendment to the amendment providing that the committee is elected."

An **amendment to an amendment** is made in the same way as an amendment or a motion. It requires a second. When it is made, the discussion then must take place on the amendment to the amendment. The chair can sometimes ask the

maker of the motion and his second whether they would be willing to accept the amendment as part of the original motion. If they agree and no other member objects, this can be done, saving time and energy.

Otherwise, the amendment to the amendment, the amendment, and the motion must be debated and voted upon step by step in that order. And the chair must carry through each step until the main motion has been voted on. A favorable vote on an amendment or an amendment to the amendment does not carry the main motion with it. Members may favor an amendment as the least objectionable choice and still oppose the idea embodied in the main motion.

It is important to note that while there can be an amendment to an amendment, there cannot be two separate amendments to a motion before the meeting at the same time. That is as far as the situation can go, for there can be no amendment to an amendment to the amendment.

### **Voting**

When it appears that no one else wants to discuss the motion or propose amendments, the chair asks, "Are you ready for the question?" If no one desires to speak, the vote is taken. But the chair must use care not to cut off debate.

When the membership is ready to vote the chair (or Secretary) reads the motion again.

### **By General Consent**

When a motion isn't likely to be opposed, the chair says: "If there is no objection ...". Members show agreement by their silence. If someone objects, the matter must be put to a vote.

### **By Voice**

For a simple voice vote the chair then says: "All those in favor of this motion say 'aye.' ... those opposed, 'no.'" If the response is favorable, the chair then says: "The ayes have it and it is so ordered."

The chair should always be sure to call for the

"nays" as well as the "ayes" although there seems to be a unanimous vote in favor.

A member may move for an exact count on any vote.

### **By Show of Hands**

When there is any doubt on the part of the chair or the membership as to which side has won, a vote by show of hands or a standing vote is in order. The chair may ask for such action. In fact, it is suggested that a show of hands be used as the common measure, since this will give a clear-cut division of the membership on all issues.

A member may call for a vote by a show of hands by simply calling out the word "division" from his seat. The chair must grant this request at all times. If the group is a large one the chair may appoint, or have available, a committee of tellers who will count hands for or against the move. Otherwise, the Secretary and the chair do the counting. The actual count should be made unless the result is so obvious as to be without

question.

### **By Roll Call**

If a record of each person's vote is needed, each member answers "yes," "no," or "present" (indicating the choice not to vote) as his or her name is called.

### **By Ballot**

By law, elections and a vote on local dues require a secret ballot. This makes each vote a matter of record and it preserves secrecy. In other instances, a vote by ballot may be agreed to by general consent, or by a motion from the floor. Such a motion is not debatable and requires a simple majority.

### **Tie Vote**

A tie vote is not a majority, and the motion fails. It is within the discretion of the chair whether to make or break a tie.

## **9. HOW ACTION TAKES PLACE**

We have discussed motions, amendments, discussion, and voting. To illustrate all this, let us take an example of a local membership acting at a meeting on a problem that has been brought before it.

We are under "New Business" in the agenda.

The chair asks: "Is there any new business?"

A sister in the third row is given the floor.

"Mr. Chairman, it seems to me, we have sent several delegates to union leadership training schools during the past several years, but I don't recall participating in any program led by those new leaders. I think if we are going to spend money to send ..."

### **Make the Motion First**

The chair interrupts the sister by saying: "The chair appreciates your interest in leadership

training. If you have any suggestions to make in the use of trained leaders, please put them in the form of a motion. Unless there is a motion on the floor you cannot speak."

"Okay, Mr. Chairman," says the sister. "I move that the president appoint an education committee from among the persons who have attended leadership training schools so that we can begin to realize ..."

### **Getting a Second**

Again, the chair interrupts. "Is there a second to this motion that I appoint an education committee from among those who attended leadership schools?" Several voices speak up to "second the motion." "All right, sister, now you may speak on your motion."

"Well, as I was saying, it's a waste to send

people off to leadership training schools, and then let them get lost without any opportunity to serve on an education committee. All of us need more information to cope with the problems we are facing as citizens in our union and our nation. And I guess I could use a class on rules for union meetings by the way I'm conducting myself here tonight."

### **An Amendment**

"Mr. Chairman." Sister Brown seeks the floor and is recognized. "Mr. Chairman, I agree with the sister from Department 6, that we should have an education committee, but I don't think we should limit education committee membership to persons who have attended leadership training schools. I move we amend the motion so that the president can appoint any interested person to the education committee."

The chair restates the proposed amendment and asks if there is a second. There is, and the chair asks if there is any discussion on the amendment.

### **One Thing at a Time**

"Mr. Chairman!"

"Yes, Brother Hernandez."

"Mr. Chairman, there are a lot of activities that we ought to start. I hear lots of good things about credit unions and I'm sure a lot of fellows would join one ... ."

"Just a minute, Brother Hernandez, are you rising to talk on the amendment to the motion about setting up a local union education committee? If not, you are out of order, and I'll have to ask you to take your seat. Sister Ester, did you want to speak on the amendment?"

"Yes, Mr. Chairman, but I noticed that no one has said anything about the size of the committee, so I would like to offer an amendment that this committee should have seven members."

"Sister Ester, this is an amendment to the second degree. We are now discussing an amendment to the amendment that would permit the selection of seven interested persons to the edu-

cation committee and not limit it just to persons who have attended union schools."

There are several "Seconds."

"Mr. Chairman!" The sister in the third row who made the original motion rises. "I'll accept this amendment as part of my original motion."

The chair asks, "Mr. Secretary, who seconded this motion?" "I did, sir, and I'll accept the amendment, also."

"If there is no objection, the original motion is now further amended to set the size of our education committee at seven. Is there any further discussion? We are back to the original amendment. Brother Henderson is recognized."

"Mr. Chairman, I think that the fact that a person attends a union school indicates that he has an interest in education. How better can we measure a person's interest?"

"Sister Humphrey?"

"Yes, Mr. Chairman, I agree with Sister Brown that we should open the committee to interested persons. Just because a person goes to a union school doesn't make him or her interested in the work of an education committee; they may be better as stewards or like Charlie, over here, interested in legislation. Let's put people on the committee who are interested in doing the job and then they can get special training if they need it."

### **Vote on the Amendment**

"Is there any further discussion on the amendment? There being none, we shall vote on the amendment that any interested person can be selected for an education committee. All in favor say, 'Aye' ... those opposed, 'No'. The chair is in doubt. Let's have a show of hands. Will the Secretary be the teller? All in favor of the amendment please raise your right hand ... Those opposed, like sign ..."

The Secretary takes the count and gives the results to the chair. There is a shuffle of feet and chairs in the hall.

"Quiet, please," the chair calls out. "The amendment as amended carried 46 to 42."

We will now vote on the motion as amended,



that the president of Local 101 appoint an educational committee of seven from among any interested members in the local. All those in favor say 'aye'... opposed, 'no'. The ayes have it and the motion is carried. The chair will name the committee at the next regular meeting.

Meanwhile, I will appreciate hearing from anyone who is interested in serving on this committee. I think we can all gain a great deal from such a committee and I am looking forward to working with it.

"Is there any further new business?"

## **10. MOTIONS TO HELP KEEP ORDER**

Simple as we try to keep rules in a union meeting, not every member is likely to know all of the fine points. It is the duty of the chair to see that the rules are abided by and, equally important, that explanations of the rules are made at difficult points.

### **Point of Order**

But, even the best chair may miss a violation of rules or make a ruling that is felt to be wrong. A member may call for a "point of order" if situations like these develop:

1. When discussion seems to be wandering away from the point of the motion or its amendments, a member may rise to a point of order to force the chair to bring the discussion back to the subject.
2. When the bylaws of the local or the AFGE National Constitution are being broken, a member may rise to call the chair's attention to this violation.
3. When the chair permits a member to discuss a "privileged" motion, the discussion should be halted since such a motion is undebatable.

The member wishing to call the chair's attention to an oversight or misrule simply stands and calls out: "Madam Chair, I rise to a point of order." The member may do this although another person who has the floor is being interrupted.

The chair must recognize this request. The chair asks: "Brother, what is your point of order?"

The brother states his "point of order" and the chair then rules on it. The chair may say that this point of order is well taken, or that it is not well taken.

Naturally, there are persons in some locals who make nuisances of themselves by calling for "point of order." In the case of minor infractions of rules, it would seem best to let the chair carry on without interruptions from the floor.

A point of order should not be used as:

- An excuse to slow down a meeting
- A convenient way to interrupt a speaker
- An excuse to make a speech
- An excuse to criticize the chair

### **Appeal from the Decision of the Chair**

When a member has been ruled out of order or when the chair does not accept the point of order, the usual thing is to proceed with the business at hand. If, however, a member feels that a grave injustice has been done, and that a ruling of the chair is in violation of procedure, the member may make an "appeal from the decision of the chair." This requires a "second." It then will give the meeting the opportunity to decide.

Such an appeal can only be made immediately after the ruling by the chair has been made. It may be made by any member present at the meeting.

The member announces: "I appeal the decision of the chair." If there is a second, the chair may turn the meeting over to a vice chair or other designated person. Some unions require the chair to step down. The person making the appeal takes the floor and gives a reason for appealing and then the chair states the reasons for the ruling.

This is usually the extent of the discussion. However, an appeal is debatable unless it refers to disorderly conduct, speaking off the question, the order of business, or a motion which is not debatable, or unless it arises during a vote.

No member may speak more than once except the chair, who has the right to conclude such debate. The question is put to a vote in this manner:

"All those in favor of ..." or, "Shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?"

Immediately upon the decision on the appeal, the order of business is resumed. The chair resumes control of the meeting regardless of the decision - sustained or overruled.

### **Point of Information**

When a member feels that more information is needed about the meaning of a motion or its effect on the local, the member may direct an inquiry to the chair by simply saying: "Point of information."

The chair should recognize the questioner although another person on the floor is interrupted. Needless to say, there is always the possibility that members will ask frivolous questions, or questions which convey opinions. The chair must be on guard against abuses of this sort. Courtesy and common sense should rule.

Sometimes the questioner desires information from another member. When this happens, the chair should ask the person holding the floor whether that person will yield for the purpose. The speaker cannot be forced to yield. Moreover, even if the speaker yields, the questioner must address the point of information through the chair and the answer must be made to the chair. Members may not address one another during

the meeting.

### **Parliamentary Inquiry**

When the specific information that a member is seeking has reference to parliamentary rules, this is a "parliamentary inquiry."

A member may want to know if a certain motion is in order. The chair's answer to such a question is not a decision that can be appealed. Only a decision that the chair made after the motion had been brought up would be subject to appeal.

### **Question of Privilege**

A question of privilege may be used by a member to call the attention of the chair to remedy something that affects the safety, comfort, rights, or privileges of either the assembly or the member. The questioner may ask to have the windows raised or lowered. The speaker may be asked to speak louder. Questions of privilege are decided by the chair, subject to appeal.

If the question concerns the welfare of only one person in the group, it is a question of personal privilege.

These special privileges are rights of all members but they should not be used as a pretext to disrupt a meeting. Again, common sense and decency must rule.

The form for such a motion is "Madam Chair, I rise to a question of privilege." The chair says: "State your question." "Can we ask that the members do not smoke?" The chair can answer: "Your privilege is granted. Will the sergeant-at-arms open the windows?"

Or if it is to propose a motion which cannot wait, the form is "Madam Chair, as a question of privilege, I move that all nonmembers leave while we discuss this business." The chair can grant the privilege. The motion proposed is then handled like any ordinary motion before picking up where the meeting was interrupted.

## **11. MOTIONS FOR UNUSUAL ACTION**

These are motions intended to help in the handling of action motions. They cannot be debated. Some require more than a majority vote to carry support.

### **To Object to the Consideration of a Question**

When a motion is made which will lead to discussion of a matter that will cause hard feelings or friction, a member may rise immediately to prevent discussion. Any member may rise and say, "Mr. Chairman, I object to consideration of this question." The chair will reply: "There has been an objection to the consideration of the question. Those in favor of considering the question say, 'Aye.' Those opposed, 'No.'"

There is no discussion. It is put to a vote immediately. If two-thirds of the members vote against considering the question then it cannot be brought up again during that meeting. This motion should be used only in exceptional cases.

### **Withdrawing a Motion**

The maker of a motion may decide to withdraw the motion and ask permission of the chair to withdraw the motion. The chair puts the question before the members: "If there is no objection, the motion will be withdrawn." If there is an objection, the question of withdrawal must be put to a vote. It requires no second. It cannot be debated. It then takes a simple majority to be withdrawn.

### **To Table a Motion**

A motion to table sets aside consideration of a pending main motion until such time, later in the same meeting, that the assembly votes to resume consideration of it. If the assembly fails to introduce the tabled motion at the same meeting, it dies. Thus, the motion to table may be made with intent to kill a main motion without hearing full debate. Or, a membership may seem unable to reach a conclusion, or perhaps it appears more

study should be given to a motion before debate continues. In such cases, a member makes a motion to "table the motion." Such a motion cannot be debated and requires only a majority vote.

The maker of a motion to table cannot do so while speaking on a motion being discussed, or if he has previously spoken on the motion and there are others who still desire to speak.

When a motion to table is seconded, the chair must immediately put the question of tabling to a vote. A motion to table until the next meeting is a motion to postpone. A motion to postpone is a debatable motion.

Because a motion to table postpones or delays action by a body, a motion that has been tabled can be "removed from the table." This action can be requested as soon as some other business has been transacted, or not later than the next meeting.

Thus, a member may rise to be recognized and move that the matter be "removed from the table." Again, the matter is decided without debate and by majority vote.

Killing an action by a "motion to table" can be overdone. Majority rule should be able to close debate in the regular manner and then defeat the motion.

### **To Postpone Indefinitely**

This strategy allows members to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against. It is useful in case of a badly chosen main motion for which either a "yes" or "no" vote would have undesirable consequences. If adopted, it prevents a vote from being taken on the pending main motion and bars reintroduction of that motion during the current meeting.

### **Limit or Extend Debate**

The membership may limit debate: by setting a time limit for each speaker on the same motion, by setting a time for calling the question to a vote, by prescribing the number of speeches pro

and con, or by allotting a specific amount of time for each side of a question.

Motions to limit discussion are made in the usual manner and require a second. They can be amended if the purpose of a motion to limit discussion is to establish general rules limiting talk on all questions before the local. Such a motion is debatable. If they apply only to a motion being discussed on the floor, they are not debatable. Most unions permit a majority vote to decide upon the limitation. Strict rules of parliamentary law prescribe a two-thirds majority.

Many local union bylaws limit the time a member may talk on a motion. The usual limit is five minutes. The same set of rules usually provides that no one may speak twice on the same motion if another member is waiting to speak. But this is something the chair should be able to handle even without a rule.

If it is felt that discussion should be extended after it has been limited, this may be done by a motion to extend debate. This motion must have a second. It is not debatable and, again, most unions accept a majority vote for a decision.

### **Move the Previous Question**

A motion to call for "the previous question" is a method of stopping all discussion on a motion and forcing a vote. In many locals persons who want to vote call out "Question" from their seats. This should have no effect in stopping someone who wants to speak on a motion. As long as someone wants to talk, the chair should recognize him or her.

A motion to "call for the previous question" starts in the usual way. The form is: "I move the previous question," or: "I move that we close debate and vote on the question."

The motion requires a second. It is not debatable. A person cannot make such a motion while speaking on the question, or if the person has spoken and there are still others who want the floor. Many unions accept a majority vote for a decision. (*Robert's Rules* requires a two-thirds majority.)

The chair should put this motion to a vote as

soon as it is seconded. If the move for the "previous question" passes, then the chair should repeat, or have read, the main motion with amendments, if any, and call for a vote.

### **Motion to Reconsider**

If a local has approved a motion on some matter that later events or new information indicate should be reconsidered, this may be done with a motion to reconsider.

A move to reconsider can be made only on the same day that the vote on the motion to be reconsidered was taken or at the next meeting. The motion to reconsider must be made by a person who voted with the majority in the first vote. Any member may second this motion. If the vote was by secret ballot, any member may move to reconsider.

Not all motions can be reconsidered. Motions to adjourn, recess, lay on the table, take from the table, suspend the rules, or a previous move to reconsider, cannot be reconsidered. Nor should a motion to reconsider be used to reconsider an action that has been partially acted upon.

Because the motion to reconsider has as its purpose the correction of a mistake made by the group, it is a privileged motion, and the maker of it may interrupt a speaker and make the motion while there is other business on the floor. However, debate on the motion to reconsider does not start until the work that was on the floor has been completed.

The member desiring to make a motion to reconsider says to the chair: "I move that we reconsider the vote on ... (identifying the motion)." If there is a second, the chair puts the matter of reconsideration before the group. The move to reconsider is debatable and usually requires only a majority vote to pass. However, at the National Convention, it requires a two-thirds vote (Appendix C, Section 10 of the AFGE National Constitution). No question can be reconsidered twice.

When a motion to reconsider passes, the original motion in question is brought before the group as it was before the vote was taken and

debate on it continues. The Secretary should carefully read aloud the minutes of the meeting dealing with the original debate on the question.

### **Motion to Rescind**

A motion to "rescind" nullifies a previous decision of the group. Such a motion is made in the normal fashion and can be made by any member. It requires a two-thirds vote.

Under some circumstances, a motion can be rescinded by a majority vote. Thus, a motion passed at one meeting can be rescinded at the next meeting by a majority vote, if the members were notified at the first meeting that an attempt to rescind would be made at the next meeting. For such a purpose, a motion to reconsider can

be used, but some unions prefer to use a motion to rescind.

Just as with a motion to reconsider, the motion to rescind cannot be used to reverse an action that cannot be reversed - if money has been spent or someone has left on a trip.

The passage of a motion to rescind reverses a previous action. A motion to reconsider simply reopens the matter for further discussion and decision by the group. The latter should be in order for most cases, but this can be a matter of union bylaws or local ground rules.

A motion to rescind may be made by any member at any meeting. A motion to reconsider must be made by a member who voted with the majority at the same meeting at which the original motion was passed, or the next succeeding meeting.

## **12. MISCELLANEOUS MOTIONS**

### **To Suspend the Rules**

Occasionally something may come up which requires a change in the order of business. For example, Article XVIII of the AFGE National Constitution requires a vote of the members without debate on a trial committee's report, and thus the first order of business should be the report. There may be a deadline on an important question. There may be a question that requires more time for debate, or a visiting speaker may want to come and go as early as possible. For these or other occasions, the chair can request a motion to "suspend the rules."

This motion can be offered by a member rising and saying: "Mr. Chairman, since many of the members present have to make the special shift, I move that we suspend the rules and consider the question of registration now rather than wait for new business."

This motion requires a second. It cannot be debated. It needs a two-thirds vote to pass.

### **Move to Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn is required to end a meeting. It is particularly "in order" when there is no further business to come before the meeting. The right to adjourn belongs to the members and not to the chair, but the chair can indicate when it is best to entertain such a motion.

However, the motion to adjourn the meeting can be made at any time except during a vote or when someone has the floor. The mover must first be recognized by the chair. The motion to adjourn requires a second. It is not debatable. It takes only a majority to carry.

When the motion is made before the "planned" end of the meeting, the chair has the right and obligation to point out to the members what items the local's executive board thinks should be acted upon. The mover of the motion can be asked to withdraw the motion for the present.

This does not mean that the members should allow the chair continually to drag out meetings

simply for the sake of the agenda or out of courtesy to the chair and the officers.

If the motion to adjourn is accepted, any question stopped by such action may be brought up at the next meeting as old business. If the motion is defeated, it cannot be renewed until the

group has acted upon some other motion or report.

A meeting is legally adjourned only when, following a vote on the motion, the chair announces adjournment. Then no further business can transpire.

### **13. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

When the time comes, the chair of the Election Committee calls for nominations. They are made orally from the floor as the chair recognizes each member seeking the privilege of placing a name before the membership.

Placing a member in nomination merely requires permission from the chair to rise and say: "Mr. Chairman, I nominate Joe Duffy, second shift, Film Division." A member of the Election Committee writes down the name of each nominee. No second is required.

As nominations are made, the chair should guard against persons who would close nominations as soon as their favorite candidates have been nominated. Any motion to close nominations should be ruled out of order by the chair until adequate time has been allowed for every

potential candidate to be named. Many chairs ask three times for further nominations.

The motion to close nominations requires a second and a two-thirds vote to support it. This is an undebatable motion. The chair says: "The motion has been made and seconded that nominations be closed. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.'"

When nominations have been closed, the chair should ask the Secretary to read the names of the candidates from the last nominated to first. Each nominee should accept or decline at this time or indicate his or her decision in writing some time before the close of nominations.

Nominations and elections are thoroughly discussed in AFGE's *Election Manual*, available from the district office, AFGE's Service Department, and on the AFGE website.

### **14. MOTIONS WITH PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **Things You May Do When Another Member Has the Floor**

1. Rise to a point of order, point of information, or question of privilege
2. Object to the consideration of the question
3. Move to reconsider
4. Appeal

#### **Motions That Cannot Be Amended**

1. To adjourn (if the motion is to adjourn at a particular time it can be amended)
2. To table, or to take from the table

3. To reconsider
4. To call for the previous question
5. To suspend the rules
6. To object to the consideration of the question
7. To postpone indefinitely

#### **Motions That Cannot Be Debated**

1. To fix a time to adjourn, or to adjourn
2. To object to the consideration of a question
3. To table, or to take from the table
4. To call for the previous question
5. To limit or extend debate

6. To withdraw a motion
7. To suspend the rules

### **Motions That Do Not Require a Second**

1. To object to the consideration of a question
2. To withdraw a motion
3. To call for a division of the house
4. Point of order

### **Motions That Require a Two-Thirds Vote**

1. To suspend the rules
2. To sustain an objection to the consideration of a question
3. To rescind (except as noted in the text)
4. To limit or close debate (in some unions)
5. To close nominations

### **Motions Used to Delay Action on the Original Motion**

1. To postpone indefinitely
2. To postpone definitely
3. To refer to committee
4. To lay on the table

### **Check List for Union Meetings**

- ✓ Has the Executive Board met to plan the agenda?
- ✓ Have the officers been contacted and general publicity about the meeting been handled?
- ✓ Are the minutes of the previous meeting ready for presentation?
- ✓ Is the correspondence ready for presentation?
- ✓ Are committees prepared to report? (Do they know when and how much time they have been given to report?)
- ✓ Has the meeting hall been prepared? (Check flag, heat, lights, ventilation, chairs, rest-rooms, etc.)
- ✓ Is all special equipment ready to use? (Blackboards, easels, projectors, micro-phones, etc.)
- ✓
- ✓ Are program arrangements complete? (Have education films or pamphlets arrived?)
- ✓ Are materials ready for distribution? (Agenda, financial reports, minutes of the last meeting, committee reports, newspapers, pamphlets, or handbills.)
- ✓ Have arrangements been made for guests or special speakers? (Do they know when and where the meeting is being held? Do they know what you expect them to do?)

## **15. TIPS ON HOW TO REACH THE UNION MEMBER**

There are many ways to reach the union member besides union meetings. Not everyone can or will come to a union meeting no matter how hard you try, though you can improve attendance if union meetings are more interesting and run efficiently. How to run an interesting, democratic and efficient meeting is the subject of this booklet. Some other ways are:

**Welcome the new member.** Make new members feel that they are a significant addition to the union and will share many benefits won

through collective bargaining. Tell them about union-won benefits in a letter or a new member's kit. Plan an initiation or orientation program. Shop stewards should invite new members to the union meeting, and explain how the union functions to protect every member's rights.

**Reach out to the young member.** Union solidarity requires involvement of younger people as well as more experienced trade unionists in running the union. Recruit young members with leadership potential to serve on committees

and participate in training programs, summer schools, and other activities. Keep the union open to all groups and welcome their ideas. The generation gap disappears when the democratic process works.

**Train shop stewards.** Shop stewards are the average member's direct link with the union. When the shop steward does not know the answers, there is a serious break in the union's ability to function. Contract enforcement, grievance procedure, information on political action, in-plant safety all depend on a strong, well informed, dedicated crew of shop stewards. Hold periodic classes to train new stewards and provide senior stewards with an opportunity to review the contract and swap information.

**Start a public relations campaign.** Union members as well as other citizens are influenced by the distorted image of unions created by the public press. To counteract this unfavorable image, local unions should have a public relations program to tell the truth about the union, the employee, the contract, and the problems. Write letters to the editor of your favorite newspaper,

and send out press releases on union activities that are newsworthy. Learn to tap newer outlets such as cable TV and the Internet.

**Improve your union publications.** Whether you publish a newsletter or a newspaper, it will only be widely read IF you plan each issue carefully. By planning and working in advance you can achieve an attractive, readable format and publish timely, relevant stories. Stick to the facts and write a good news story long on facts and short on adjectives and opinions. Use cartoons, pictures and features. Announce the union meetings. The paper can help get members to attend.

**Communicate** through a variety of techniques that will stimulate greater interest and attention. Try using some of the following media: videotape, movies, colorful posters, audiotape cassette recorders. Remember the AFL-CIO has the largest labor film library in the country. Write for a catalogue today at AFL-CIO, 815 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20006 (202) 637-5000, fax 637-5058, [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org).

## ALL THE RULES AT A GLANCE

The chart on the following page is designed to be a quick reference guide for a chair who is conducting a meeting. It contains a list of the motions most often used at a union meeting. The motions are listed in order of priority. Thus, with some exceptions, a motion on the list is in order even if one below it is pending; and when any motion is made those below it are out of order.

As can be seen on the chart, there are three groups of motions other than main motions. Privileged motions have a very high priority. They are motions which, while having no relation to the pending question, are of such urgency that they take priority over all other motions. Incidental motions are motions which arise out of main motions or other pending questions and

must be decided before the pending question, or before other business is taken up. Subsidiary motions are motions to dispose of or change a main motion or certain other motions.

No simplified chart can enumerate all the very fine points of the rules, but it can be helpful in the usual situations.





	<b>Motion</b>	<b>Debat-able</b>	<b>Amen-dable</b>	<b>Re-quires a Sec-ond</b>	<b>Vote Required</b>	<b>In Order When Another Is Speaking</b>	<b>Can Be Reconsid-ered</b>	<b>Motions to Which It Applies</b>	<b>Motions Which Ap-ply to It</b>
<b>Privileged Motions</b>	Time for Next Meeting (when privileged)	No	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	No	None	Amend
	Adjourn	No	No	Yes	Majority	No	No	None	None
	Recess	No	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	No	None	None
	Question of Privilege (treat as main motion)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes	Yes	None	All
<b>Incidental Motions</b>	Point of Order	No	No	No	None unless appealed, then majority	Yes	No	Any motion or act	None
	Appeal	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	Yes	Yes	Any decision of the chair	Lay on table, close debate, reconsider
	Objection to Consideration of Question	No	No	No	2/3	Yes	Yes	Main motion, any question of privilege	Reconsider
	Withdrawal of Motion	No	No	No	Majority	No	Yes	Any motion	None
	Suspension of Rules	No	No	Yes	2/3	No	No	Any motion where needed	None
	Lay on the Table	No	No	Yes	Majority	No	No	Main motion, appeals, question of privilege, reconsider	None
	Previous Question	No	No	Yes	Roberts says 2/3 (majority in many unions)	No	Yes	Any debatable motion	Reconsider
	Limit or Extend Limits of Debate	No	Yes	Yes	Roberts says 2/3 (majority in many unions)	No	Yes	Any debatable motion	Reconsider

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Debat-able</b>	<b>Amen-dable</b>	<b>Re-quires a Sec-ond</b>	<b>Vote Required</b>	<b>In Order When Another Is Speaking</b>	<b>Can Be Reconsid-ered</b>	<b>Motions to Which It Applies</b>	<b>Motions Which Ap-ply to It</b>
Postpone to a Definite Time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	Yes	Main motion, question of privilege	Amend, reconsider, limit or close debate
Refer (to committee) or Commit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	Yes	Main motion, question of privilege	Amend, reconsider, limit or close debate
Amend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	Yes	Main motion, limit debate, refer, postpone, fix time of next meeting	Amend, reconsider, close debate
Postpone In-definitely	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No	Yes	Main motion, question of privilege	Limit or close debate, reconsider
Main Motion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No	Yes	None	All
Motion to Re-consider	Yes, if motion to which it applies is de-bat-able	No	Yes	Majority	Yes	No	Any motion except adjourn, suspend rules, or lay on table	Limit debate, lay on table, postpone in-definitely
Motion to Re-scind	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 of members present, when notice to rescind was given at previous meeting	No	Yes	Main motions, ap-peals, question of privilege	All

In Order of Precedence

<u>To do this</u>	You say this	Inter-rupt the speaker	Need a second	Debatable	Can it be amended	Vote needed	Can it be reconsidered
<b>Adjourn meeting</b>	I move that we adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
<b>Call an intermission</b>	I move that we recess for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
<b>Complain</b>	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No (usually)
<b>Temporarily suspend consideration</b>	I move to table the motion	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
<b>End debate and amendments</b>	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No (unless vote on question is not yet taken)
<b>Postpone discussion for a certain time</b>	I move to postpone discussion until ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
<b>Give closer study</b>	I move to refer the matter to committee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes (unless committee has already taken up the subject)
<b>Amend a motion</b>	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes (only if the motion to be amended is debatable)	Yes	Majority	Yes
<b>Introduce business</b>	I move that	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes