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THE VEST POCKET CHAIRMAN

Addendum. This is an addition to a motion. Unlike an amendment, it does not seek to alter the motion by proposing an alternative, but only to modify it by adding to it. The procedure for dealing with an addendum is, however, the same as that for dealing with an amendment.

Adjournment. Motions for adjournment may be motions to adjourn a meeting either for a specified period, or indefinitely ("sine die”). They can usually be moved only in very special circumstances, for the standing orders of most organisations prescribe fixed times for regular meetings, and motions conflicting with the standing orders are not acceptable.

Motions to adjourn discussion on a particular item of business may be taken at any time and, if carried, mean that the consideration of that item is postponed until some future time named in the motion for adjournment. The purpose of such motions is to postpone a vote, or on particularly controversial issues to suspend discussion until those present have had an opportunity to calm down.

Movers of motions to adjourn discussion must not have spoken on the item of business under discussion. Such motions may be amended but their movers have no right of reply.

If a motion for adjournment of either a meeting or a discussion is defeated, an interval must elapse before it can be moved again.

Amendment. An amendment should be a proposal seeking to improve a motion—not merely to improve the wording but to propose a better course of action. Amendments should not be negative nor merely destructive.

Lord Citrine, in his A B C of Chairmanship,\* divides amendments into five categories. These are :—

(a) Those adding words to the original motion.

(b) Those deleting words from the motion.

(c) Those deleting words and substituting others.

(d) Those deleting most of the motion and substituting a counter-proposal.

(e) Those which amend an earlier amendment.

The rules for moving and discussing an amendment are the same as those for moving and discussing a motion, except that, as a rule, the mover of an amendment has no right of reply to the discussion.

An amendment must be relevant to the terms of the original motion, and must not be frivolous. An amendment should offer a concrete alter­native proposal to that contained in the motion.

An amendment should not negative the

\* N.C.L.C., Tillicoultry, 6/8.

motion. Anyone wishing to do that can do so simply by voting against the motion.

A number of amendments may be moved to the same motion—as many in fact as the chairman will accept. When amendments are numerous, however, voting can become com­plicated unless each amendment is voted before another is debated. It is customary to vote on all amendments before a vote is taken on the motion. If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended should be put to the vote as a “substantive” motion.

Anyone who has spoken on an original motion can speak on an amendment.

When an amendment has become the sub­stantive motion, amendments to it may be proposed. If one is carried, it then becomes, in its turn, the substantive motion.

Amendment to Amendment. This may be moved at any time before an amendment is put to the vote. Its purpose is to improve the wording of the amendment and so more satis­factorily to amend the original motion. It is voted on before the first amendment and, if carried, substitutes for that amendment. It is then again put to the vote and, if carried, becomes the substantive motion and is then again put to the vote.

Block Vote. This is the same as a card vote.

Card Vote. A vote taken by card at a delegate meeting, or conference. The delegate 3

represents a certain number of members of an organisation, and is entitled to cast votes on their behalf in proportion to their numbers. The number of votes he may cast is printed on a card which he must hold up in the view of the tellers if a card vote is taken.

Card votes are taken usually only as a last resort if no satisfactory decision can be reached by other methods of voting, or if the issue is one of great importance.

Casting Vote. This is the vote every chair­man is entitled to exercise in the event of a tie in the voting. In most organisations, but not in all, the chairman has also a “deliberative” vote—an ordinary vote just like any other member—although he does not always use it. In the event of a tie, even if the Chairman has already cast his deliberative vote, he has still the right to use his casting vote. He is not, however, bound to use it; he can declare the motion “not carried.”

Catching the Chairman’s Eye. This phrase is used to describe a member's efforts to call the chairman’s attention to his desire to speak. The most usual way of doing it is to rise, or to raise the hand. It is permissible to call out "Mr. Chairman.”

A good chairman usually tries to call alter­nately on speakers for or against the proposal under discussion.

Chairman. Person appointed to control the meeting.

Chairman’s Duties in Considering Agenda.

1. Minutes. After the secretary has read the minutes, the chairman should ask someone to move that these are a correct record, and ask for a seconder. Then ask if anyone wishes to move any amendment to the correctness of the minutes. If not, say, "I declare these minutes a correct record" ; then sign the minutes. If someone objects to the correctness of the minutes and the secretary and members agree that the correction is right, the secretary will there and then make the alteration and the chairman then' says, "I declare the minutes with that alteration to be a correct record.” If there is a difference of opinion he should allow discussion and then take a vote.

2. Business Arising. Go over the minutes paragraph by paragraph and report what developments have taken place since last meeting unless any item has a special place on the Agenda. If there has been correspondence on the subject it is wise to postpone discussion by advising members that there is correspond­ence and that the matter will be discussed under correspondence. Items of importance are usually given a special place on the Agenda and any discussion should be postponed until that stage on the Agenda.

3. Correspondence. The secretary usually

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reads all correspondence requiring decisions at the meeting. He may merely report on other correspondence. In the case of invitations to attend conferences or meetings, ask if it is desired to be represented. If someone moves "that the branch be represented” and the proposal is seconded, put the proposal to the meeting.\* When the number of delegates is decided, proceed to ask for nominations of delegates. If the letter is an appeal for a donation, first ask if the meeting desires to make a donation. If it is agreed to do so, ask the meeting to determine the amount.

4. Financial Report. This should be given by the treasurer and the correctness of the report confirmed by the auditors. Ask if there are any questions on the treasurer’s report. After all questioners have been satisfied, ask that someone move that the treasurer’s report be accepted, and get a seconder.

5. Reports. Delegates to Trades Council, Area Council and other bodies are called upon to give their reports. In every case give members an opportunity to ask questions and then ask for a mover and seconder to a motion “that the report be accepted.” Thank each delegate for his report.

6. Other Competent Business. This item usually appears at the end of an agenda. If

\* In a committee meeting proposals do not usually require a seconder.

any member raises a point under this heading it must be one which is allowed by the Rules. If the matter is one of considerable importance it may be wise to accept it only as a “notice of motion” to be placed on the Agenda for next meeting.

When all the business is completed, declare the meeting closed and thank members for their attendance.

Closure. This is a term applied to ways of terminating discussion. As a rule it is done by the chairman using his discretion as to when it is desirable to take a vote. If several persons still wish to speak he will usually defer the vote until they have spoken.

The House of Commons, and many organisa­tions, provide a procedure for closing debate without allowing time for everyone who wishes to speak. One method is by agreeing before­hand on a timetable—the vote is taken at a fixed time, regardless of the state of the discussion. This is the method known in the House of Commons as "the guillotine.”

Another method of terminating discussion is to move “that the question be now put." This motion can be moved at any time, but if moved on an amendment applies only to that amend­ment. If carried, a vote must be immediately taken on the motion or amendment under discussion, the mover of which has the right 7

to reply to the motion "that the question be now put.”

"Next business” can be moved at any time on both motions and amendments and, if carried, all discussion on the subject in hand immediately ceases.

The "previous question” (see separate note) cannot be moved on an amendment. If moved and carried, discussion on the main motion ceases. If moved and rejected, the main motion must be immediately put to the vote.

If the hour laid down in standing orders for the close of the meeting is reached, discussion automatically terminates without a vote, unless the standing order is suspended by vote of the meeting.

If the adjournment of a meeting is moved and carried, discussion on a motion terminates without its being put to the vote.

If the adjournment of a discussion is moved and carried, the vote is postponed until the time cited in the motion for adjournment.

Composite Motion. This is a motion dealing with a number of aspects of a subject, or with several subjects, as an omnibus motion does. The term "composite motion" is usually reserved for motions which have arisen as a result of the "compositing” or combining of several previ­ously separate motions. This is often done at conferences. To reduce the time spent in discussing aspects of one big subject, such 8

as the cost of living, or housing, or wages restraint, all or most of the motions or amend­ments on such a subject are combined into one motion, to the wording of which the movers and seconders of all the separate motions agree. The advantage of this procedure is that there is only one discussion instead of many on the cost of living, or whatever the subject may be.

Conference. A conference is a large meeting called so that those present may confer for a special purpose. The agenda is thus restricted to what is relevant to that purpose. This definition does in fact apply to the national conferences of unions, and to the annual conference of such bodies as the Labour Party and the N.C.L.C., for the purpose of these conferences is to confer about issues of national policy, and to confer on the report submitted by national committees or executives.

In the trade union movement, conferences usually consist of delegates, i.e., persons representing others who are not present, acting on clearly defined instructions given by the persons they represent. They may have been given voting instructions on certain issues only, while other issues are left to their discretion.

Debate. A debate is a discussion of the points for and against a line of action, or for and against the truth of a statement. For instance, debates in the House of Commons on Bills are 9

really complex discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of certain courses of action.

A debate should discuss a positive proposal. Thus it is not usual to debate such a motion as the following :—

"That the trades council shall not hold an organised demonstration on May Day.”

It is customary for the chairman to call alter­nately on a speaker for and a speaker against a proposal. The mover of the original proposal, but not of an amendment to it, has the right to reply to the debate before a vote is taken.

Most organisations debate matters of business, and it is expected that action will follow the vote at the end of the debate. The first speaker is said to "move” a motion, e.g., "That this branch pay the secretary an honorarium of £5." Apart from opposing the motion, others may move amendments, e.g., "That this branch pay the secretary an honorarium of £\." If the motion were in writing the amendment should be worded : "Delete £5 and substitute £1 There are many debating societies which exist for the pleasure of debating academic questions on which it is not proposed to take any action, e.g., "That in the opinion of the society it would have been better if the Indus­trial Revolution had never taken place." Such a proposition is not really a motion, in the strict sense, and it is termed a question for debate.

The same rules are followed as if it were a motion proposing action, except that amend­ments are not usually accepted. Some such societies, moreover, allow both the proposer and the opposer to reply to the discussion— sometimes even, the chairman is allowed to sum up.

Delegate. A member of an organisation elected to represent his fellow-members at a meeting or conference. He may be instructed (mandated) how to vote on some issues : others may be left to his discretion.

Deletions from Motions. Words may be deleted from motions by the general consent of a meeting, if the mover and seconder concur. Alterations to the wording of motions may like­wise be made. This is done usually only when the substance of the motion is not affected.

Direct Negative. An amendment which pro­poses the direct opposite of a motion is a "Direct Negative” and should not be accepted. The proper course for movers of a direct negative is to oppose the motion.

Election of Officers and Committee. Once it is decided what officers there should be and whether there is to be a committee, candidates must be nominated and officers and committee­men elected. Usually, anyone entitled to vote for an office or for a committee is entitled to be nominated a candidate for it. Anyone entitled to be nominated may nominate and vote for 11

himself, but such self-nomination is very unusual. It is usual to require that nomina­tions shall be seconded, and it is possible to move, after the minimum number of nomina­tions ha\* been obtained, "nominations close.” This motion must then be put to the vote immediately and, if carried, no further nomina­tions can be taken.

A difficulty sometimes arises over the question whether a chairman eligible for re- election should preside over an election to fill his office. It is entirely in order for him to do so; indeed he may vote for himself while presiding, and may exercise the chairman’s casting vote, if required by a tie of votes, in his own favour. The only circumstance in which the chairman may not do this is if the standing orders, or the constitution, of the organisation forbid it; though, in practice, a chairman often refrains from voting for himself.

Emergency Motion. Motion on some matter of importance which has arisen since closing date for motions for conference.

Executive Committee. This is the name usually given to the committee responsible for carrying out the decisions of the national conference of an organisation, and for carrying on the business of the organisation between conferences. Powers vary according to the rules of the organisation.

Executive Report. The report presented by 12

a union Executive to its annual conference on the year’s activities. It may contain proposals for the future.

Final Agenda. Agenda showing motions plus any amendments to these motions sub­mitted by “branches” or members. Usually it is accompanied by the Executive’s Report, Accounts and list of nominations for office.

Main Question. ' This is the principal issue before a meeting—if all amendments are defeated and the original motion stands, the latter becomes the main question. If an amendment succeeds, it displaces the original motion as the main question. The main question must always be put to the vote. It is not sufficient to take a vote for the final amendment and, if that is carried, to declare that the original motion as thus amended is carried. The main question contained in the substantive motion (the original motion as amended) must be separately put to the vote, so that those who object to the original motion, and to all the amendments, may have an opportunity of making their objection effective.

Mandate. Instructions by a body to a delegate on how he should vote.

Mistakes in Voting. Sometimes, a voter un­thinkingly casts his vote in a way he did not intend. There is no remedy for this. He cannot recall his mistaken vote. In some bodies, however, the fact that a mistake was 13

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made is recorded in the minutes if the mistake is declared by the voter before the result of the counting is made known.

Motions Taken as Amendments. Any motion seeking to alter the rules or constitution is usually considered to be an amendment. In that case the rules are the motion. Movers of such motions do not—because they are really amendments—have right to reply to debate. "Reference Back” of a report is also an amend­ment as the report is the motion. The mover of the Reference Back has no right of reply.

Mover. The person who puts forward a proposal, whether an original proposal or an amendment of someone else’s proposal. The mover of an original motion, or of a substantive motion (if any amendment is proposed to the original one), is entitled to reply to discussion. The mover of an amendment is not entitled to reply.

Negative Motion. A motion in the negative cannot be accepted. All motions must be positive.

“Nem. Con.” An abbreviation of a Latin phrase “nemine contradicente" meaning “with nobody speaking against.” A motion is said to be carried “nem. con." when no one votes against it. In such a case the proposal is not carried unanimously, for several entitled to vote may have abstained. For a unanimous vote, everyone must vote and vote in the same way.

Next Business. This is a motion that the meeting abandon the business in hand and proceed immediately to the next item on the agenda. If it is carried, that is exactly what the meeting does. If next business is rejected, the meeting carries on where it left off.

A motion for next business, like a motion for the "previous question," must be put to the vote immediately. It can be moved on amendments, unlike the previous question, and may be moved only by members who have not spoken on the business under discussion. The chairman has discretion to refuse to accept a motion for next business, although it may be moved at any time.

Next business is treated as an amendment to the main motion under discussion but takes precedence over all other amendments. Should next business be carried that is the only instance in which no vote is taken on the main question. It is most unusual to allow discussion on a motion for next business.

If a motion for next business is rejected, it may be moved again on the same item of business, but only after what the chairman considers an acceptable interval.

Notice of Meeting. It is usual to circulate written notice of a meeting, though this is sometimes not done if the meeting occurs regularly at a fixed interval. Notice of a special meeting should always be circulated.

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The most usual period of notice is seven days. In the case of a special meeting, or one that meets at irregular intervals, longer notice should be given.

When circulating notice of a meeting, it is usual to circulate the agenda at the same time.

Some organisations read the notice convening a meeting at the beginning of the meeting.

Notice of Amendment. Some organisations require notice of amendments to motions important enough for notice of the motion to be required. The object is for members or delegates to have an opportunity of considering prior to the meeting both the motion and the relevant amendments and, if necessary, to seek a mandate on them.

Notice of amendment is required for most big conferences.

Notice of Motion. Many organisations require that motions on matters of importance cannot be debated unless those present have been given an opportunity of considering them in advance. The mover of such a motion is therefore required to give notice of his motion in writing to the secretary in time to enable the secretary to include it in the circulated agenda.

This practice is invariable in the case of conferences, and in the case of bodies, such as trades councils, composed of delegates who are often required to vote in accordance with the 16

opinions of their branches on matters of importance.

Omnibus Motion. This is a motion consisting of a number of clauses, each clause dealing with a separate aspect of the subject, or with a different subject. An omnibus motion may include almost anything, and may run to as many as a dozen paragraphs.

The purpose of these motions is to save time at important meetings of big conferences where time is precious. Thus, instead of having a separate discussion on each of the issues as a separate motion, only one discussion is held, in which any or all of the issues may be considered. An omnibus motion, unlike a composite motion, need not arise as the result of combining other separate motions.

An original motion may cover so many subjects as to be an omnibus motion.

Original Motion. This is the first proposal moved 011 any subject before any amendments have been moved. If an amendment is carried, the original motion as amended is put to the vote. If all amendments are defeated, the original motion is not automatically carried but has still to be put to the vote.

Point of Information. This is a query intended to elucidate some point in the discus­sion. It should always be addressed to the chairman, but may be more suitably answered by the member who is speaking.

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Point of Order. This is a query relating to the conduct of a meeting, and should always be addressed to the chairman and answered by him. A point of order should always query whether the business is being conducted in accordance with the accepted rules of debate, or in accordance with the standing orders of the organisation.

The chairman’s ruling on a point of order is usually accepted as final. If sufficient members disagree with him, however, a vote may be taken. Usually, a two-thirds majority is necessary to overturn the chairman’s ruling.

Political Levy. Since the repeal of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act a proportion of members’ contributions can be used by their union to pay fees to the Labour Party nationally and locally. Individual members not wishing to pay this levy must “contract out,’’ i.e., give a notice in writing to the union, intimating that they do not wish to pay.

Preliminary Agenda. Agenda showing motions proposed for discussion at a conference. It is circulated to give opportunity for amendments to be put forward.

Previous Question. This is a motion meaning “that the question be not now put.”

When the previous question is moved, the chairman must immediately put it to the vote. If earned, the meeting proceeds to the next business because it has been decided that the

issue on which the previous question was moved cannot be voted on. If the previous question is rejected, a vote on the main question must be taken at once. The effect of moving the previous question therefore is to end discussion on the item of business on hand, whether the motion for the previous question is carried, or not.

The previous question cannot be moved on an amendment, takes precedence over all amendments, cannot be moved in committee, and once moved cannot be withdrawn. If the previous question is moved, the main motion cannot be withdrawn. Discussion on the previous question is permissible but unusual.

The "previous question” is so confusing that it is usually much better (and simpler) to move "next business.”

Putting the Question. Another phrase for taking the vote.

Quorum. The number who must be present before business can be done. Usually fixed by the rules, constitution, or standing orders of the organisation.

Reference Back. The usual method of opposing the whole or part of the report or minutes of a committee is to move "The Reference Back.” If carried, the committee concerned must reconsider the matter.

Reply and Right of Reply. To reply is to answer the points raised in the debate on a motion, whether these points are raised 011 an 19

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amendment or the original motion. Only the mover of the motion has the right to reply. No seconder, and no mover of an amendment, can reply unless the standing orders of the organisa­tion specifically permit it.

Representative. A representative is a person chosen to represent others on an organisation or committee. Unlike a delegate a representa­tive is, however, not mandated but is free to use his own judgment on all matters arising in connection with his duties as representative.

Rescinding of Resolutions. Resolutions can­not be rescinded by the meeting which passes them. A period of time, usually laid down in standing orders, must elapse before a resolution can be rescinded, except in an emergency. Notice of motion is usually necessary if it is proposed to rescind a resolution.

If, however, later in the meeting it becomes clear that the resolution should not be acted upon, the meeting can give instructions that nothing be done on it until after the next meeting.

Resolution. A resolution is a motion which has been carried.

Roll Call Vote. A method of taking a vote by calling out the names of those entitled to vote at a meeting, and recording their answers. This method is usually used only when the voters have been mandated and the motion is one of considerable importance. The purpose 20

of it is to disclose who has voted and how they have voted.

Rules Revision. All organisations should have Rules for the conduct of their business. Their constitutions should therefore provide procedure for amending those Rules. Large organisations, like trade unions, sometimes do this at Rules Revision Conferences at which the only business is to consider proposals for amending the Rules. In some organisations these conferences recur at regular intervals. In others, they may take place at the instance of the Executive Committee or on the petition of a substantial proportion of the membership.

Some smaller organisations, e.g., some trades councils, make provision at the Annual General Meeting for consideration of motions amending the Rules ; or they may call a special meeting for the purpose if sufficient members desire that.

Seconder. The first person to support a proposal put forward by somebody else, whether the proposal is an original one, or an amendment. A seconder has no right to reply to discussion.

Special Meeting. This is a meeting convened to consider business other than the regular routine business of an organisation. No matters should be considered which are not relevant to the special purpose for which the meeting is called. Normally, no minutes will be read to the meeting for approval, although minutes of it will be kept and submitted to the regular 21

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business meeting. Notice of the special meeting should be circulated and. the authority to convene it should be declared at the beginning of the meeting, as well as the business it is intended that it should consider. Standing orders do not necessarily apply to special meetings. Decisions as to the duration of the meeting, the length of speeches, quorum, etc., may have to be made at the beginning of the special meeting, or before it takes place by the body under whose authority it is convened.

The item "other business” cannot be taken at a special meeting, for a special meeting is competent only to discuss the agenda provided.

Standing Committee. A sub-committee of an executive body. These committees usually have executive powers and usually have one specific subject to administer, such as Finance, Propaganda or Education. Since they have administrative powers they Are invariably composed of executive members, although they may have an outside expert or two included.

Standing Orders.\* These constitute the code of rules governing the conduct of a meeting. They are not to be confused with the con­stitution of the organisation calling the meeting. Standing orders may lay down the duration of a meeting, how many constitute a quorum, the

\* A newly-elected chairman, or one who expects to be so elected, should study the Standing Orders until he really knows them. He can then avoid making mistakes.

order of business, the procedure for moving motions and amendments, procedure for closing debate, the time each speaker may speak, and the procedure for voting, f When it is thought desirable to prolong the meeting beyond the stated time, or to allow longer or shorter contributions to the discussion, or in any other way to get round the rules under which the business is conducted, a member must move the suspension of the appropriate standing order. Sometimes, the suspension of a standing order is moved for a specific purpose or a definite length of time. Thus if standing order No. 7 should lay down that a meeting should conclude at 9.30, it may be moved "that standing order No. 7 be suspended and that the meeting continue until 10 o’clock.”

To suspend standing orders a two-thirds majority is usually required.

Standing Orders Committee. Committee ap­pointed to manage a conference. It sees to the order of the business, arranges composite motions and amendments, and watches that the rules are not infringed.

Substantive Motion. Name given to a motion on which an amendment has been carried. The

t Other rules may be included but they must be relevant to the conduct of business at meetings to which the standing orders relate. Thus a rule may be inserted in the standing orders making it impossible to raise a matter on which a decision has been taken until six months have elapsed since the decision.

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motion as altered by the amendment or amend­ments is the substantive motion. It must be voted on unless next business or the previous question is moved and carried.

Vote. This is the method of taking a decision on a motion. A vote may be by acclamation, by show of hands, by ballot, or by card.

In a vote by acclamation the chairman asks those in favour of a motion to shout “aye” and those against to shout "no.” If it's clear that one side is more numerous than the other, he declares the result. This method is often used in the House of Commons. If there is any doubt, however, the chairman should proceed to take a vote by show of hands, by ballot or by card, as the situation requires.

In a vote by show of hands or by card, tellers may be required.—one or two from each side, depending on the number present. They count and report any irregularity, e.g., if one member puts both hands up. Usually, if the meeting is a small one, the chairman or another officer counts the hands. In a vote by ballot, those present mark slips of paper which are collected, often by scrutineers appointed for the purpose. Scrutineers count the votes. Sometimes the chairman or the secretary counts the votes.

Withdrawal of Motions and Amendments. A motion or an amendment may be withdrawn at any time at the request of its mover, providing his seconder concurs and the meeting unanimously agrees.

“A Memory Tickler”

is how this little booklet can be described.

If, however, you want to get a real grip of the art of being a good chairman, you should enrol for the N.C.L.C.’s Postal Course on

CHAIRMANSHIP

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See inside front cover.

