

Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised

Part II. - Organization, Meetings, and Legal Rights of Assemblies.

Art. XII. - Organization and Meetings.

71. Meeting of a Convention.

(a) An Organized Convention

71. Meeting of a Convention or Assembly of Delegates. *(a) An Organized Convention.* If a convention is an organized body (that is, if when convened it has a constitution and by-laws and officers), a committee on credentials, or registration, and one on program, should have been appointed previous to the meeting. These committees may have been appointed at the previous convention, or by the executive board, or by the president, as prescribed by the by-laws. The committee on credentials, or registration, should be on hand somewhat before the time of the meeting, in some cases the day before, so as to be prepared to submit its report immediately after the opening addresses. It should furnish each delegate, **when he registers, with a badge or card as evidence of his being a delegate** and having the right of admission to the hall. The committee on program should in most cases have the programs printed in advance. In many cases it is better that the constituent bodies be furnished in advance with copies of the program. This should always be done when there is difficulty in getting full delegations to attend. In addition to these two committees there are a number of local committees usually appointed by the local society, as on entertainment, etc. One of the general officers usually performs the duty of a committee on transportation, to obtain reductions in railroad fares, etc.

When the hour appointed for the meeting arrives, the president, as the permanent presiding officer of a convention is usually called, stands at the desk and, striking it with the gavel to attract attention, and says, "The convention will come to order." In large conventions there is usually much confusion and noise at the opening, and it requires self-control, firmness, and tact on the part of the presiding officer to preserve proper order so that all members may hear and be heard. It is a mistake for the chairman to try to stop the noise by pounding with the gavel and talking so loud as to be heard in spite of conversation on the floor. It is better for him to set the example of being quiet, and to stop all business while the noise is such that members cannot hear. Members should be required to be seated and to refrain from talking except when addressing the chair.

When the convention has come to order it is customary to have some opening exercises, the nature of which depends upon the character of the convention. In the majority of cases the convention is opened with prayer, an address of welcome, and a response. The program, however, is the president's guide as to the order of business, even though it has not yet been adopted by the convention. **It should provide for hearing the report of the credential committee as soon as the opening exercises are concluded, so that it may be known who are entitled to vote. This committee's report usually consists merely of a list of the delegates and their alternates, if any, whose credentials have been found correct,** and of the ex-officio members of the convention, no one being on the list, however, who has not registered as present. The constitution should always provide that such are present of the officers of the convention, the members of the Board of Managers, and the chairmen of the committees that are required to report at the convention, shall be ex-officio members of the convention.

When this report of the credential committee is presented it is read either by the chairman of the committee or by the reading secretary, or official reader, if there is one. In all cases, it, and all other reports, should be read from the platform. When the chairman of a committee cannot read so as to be heard, the report should be read by a reading secretary, or official reader, who should be appointed in every large convention, solely for the purpose of reading resolutions, reports, etc. If there is a case of contest between two sets of delegates and there is serious doubt as to which is entitled to recognition, the committee should omit both from the list and report the fact of the contest. If the committee, however, thinks the contest not justified, it should ignore it and enter on the list the names of the legitimate delegates. A motion should be made to accept or adopt the report, which, after it is stated by the chair, is open to debate and amendment. No one can vote whose name is not on the list of delegates reported by the committee. Upon the motion to substitute one delegation for another, neither one can vote. So upon a motion to strike out the names of a delegation whose seats are contested they cannot vote. But upon the main motion to accept the report, **all persons whose names are on the list of members as reported by the committee and amended by the convention are entitled to vote, and they alone.** When this report has been adopted, the president should immediately call upon the program committee for a report. The chairman of that committee submits the printed program and moves, or someone else moves, its adoption. This is open to debate and amendment, and when once adopted by a majority vote cannot be deviated from except by a two-thirds vote of those voting, or by a majority vote of the enrolled membership.

The membership of the convention and the program having been decided, the convention is ready for its business as laid down in the program. The two committees, though they have made their reports, are continued through the session, as supplementary reports may be required from them. **Additional delegates may arrive,** and speakers on the program may be sick or unable to be present, or for other reasons a change in the program may be necessary. These two committees should be allowed at any time to make additional reports. The business is conducted as described in the preceding section, but, of course, the program must be followed. Boards and standing committees and the treasurer are always required to submit annual reports, and sometimes reports are required from various other officers. Generally officers and the board of managers, etc., are elected annually; but some constitutions make the term of office two years, and some provide, in addition, that only about half the officers shall be elected at any one annual meeting. In most organizations it is better to have the term of office begin at the close of the convention, so that the same officers will serve throughout the meetings. At the beginning of the first meeting each day the minutes of the preceding day are read and approved. At the close of the convention, if there is not time to read the minutes of the last day, a motion should be adopted authorizing the board, or some committee, to approve the minutes of that day. As the proceedings of a convention are usually published, a publishing committee should be appointed, which should have the power to edit the proceedings. When through with its business the convention adjourns sine die.