

A PARLIAMENTARY SOURCEBOOK FOR STUDENT CONGRESS DELEGATES

by James M. Copeland

Knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure is a *sine qua non* for district and national Congress contenders and beginning legislators alike. Such knowledge allows a delegate to:

- * Maximize opportunities to demonstrate congressional skills.
- * Accept positions of leadership on and off the floor.
- * Effectively preside over chambers.
- * Earn outstanding congressperson nominations.

Unfortunately the study of Parliamentary Procedure, usually done by rote memorization, is deadly dull and usually avoided, except for a few cursory glances at a parliamentary table of motions. (See the page facing this article.)

This article will demonstrate the "hands on" creation of a parliamentary procedure sourcebook. The construction of such a reference will:

- * Create a user friendly reference for use in congressional chambers.
- * Teach the precedence of motions.
- * Provide useful knowledge about the motions.
- * Serve as a handy guide for presiding officers or adult parliamentarians.
- * Teach the fundamental principles of Parliamentary Procedure.

Construction and Labeling

Three implements are needed to construct the notebook: A "steno" notebook (6" X 9", with spiral wire top), a pair of scissors, a pen.

First, count 24 pages and on the bottom line of page 24 write "Main Motion" in large capital letters. Turn one page back, page 23, and on the second line from the bottom write "Postpone Indefinitely". Cut off the bottom line. On the next previous page, page 22, count 3 lines from the bottom and write "Amend" on that line. Cut off the bottom two lines. You will see the start of a ladder - the full page "main motion" is preceded by a page one line shorter "Postpone Indefinitely", and that page is preceded by a page two lines shorter "Amend". Continue cutting each previous page one line shorter than the one behind it and labeling the last line of each page with a motion name following the Parliamentary Chart (on the page facing this article). When you are finished cutting you will have 24 pages each one line shorter than the page behind which creates a list, in ladder format, of all the motions in order of precedence.

etc.
REFER TO COMMITTEE
AMEND THE AMENDMENT
AMEND
POSTPONE INDEFINITELY
MAIN MOTION

Information About Motions

Now it is time to add to each page the key information about each motion that you will need as a Congressperson or presiding officer. Each page should contain: Purpose of the motion, category of the motion, whether one delegate can interrupt the speech of another to make the motion, whether the motion requires a second, whether it may be amended, whether it may be debated, and what vote or decision is required to enact it.

For example, the main motion page beginning about 5 lines from the bottom may look like this:

Purpose: To introduce new business.	
Category: Main	Interrupt: No
Second: Yes	Amend: Yes
Debate: Yes	Vote: Majority
Main Motion	

Remember that motions are in categories or "families" and each group has a general purpose. All main motions are substantive. That is, whether a bill or a resolution, the main motion presents substance -- an idea, a plan of action, a change in public policy, an opinion of the chamber about an idea, person, event, thing.

All other motions are procedural. That is, they provide alternative ways to handle the main motion or run the meeting. Some procedural motions are called subsidiary. Subsidiary motions provide ways to change or dispose of the main motion. The Amendment (and its Amendment) change the content of the main motion. Other subsidiary motions like the two to "Postpone" ("Indefinitely" and "to a Certain Time"), "Refer to Committee", and "Lay on the Table" attempt to remove the motion from the floor. "Reconsider", "Rescind", and "Take from the Table" wish to consider a previous motion. "Previous Question" (vote immediately) and "Limit or Extend Debate" govern floor discussion.

Incidental motions are procedural motions which protect the rights and privileges of members. Some are quite dramatic like "Object to Consideration" where subject matter is so repulsive that the body does not wish to even formally consider it; and "Point of Order" and "Appeal. . ." where a member challenges that the chair made a parliamentary error; or "Suspend the Rules"! Other incidental motions are tame. "Divide a Motion", "Withdraw or Modify a Motion", and "Call for a Roll Call Vote" are usually formalities.

Still other procedural motions, Privileged, are so important to the running of the assembly they have top priority: "Recess", "Adjourn", "Fix Time for Reassembling" are almost always in order. "A Question of Privilege" is usually personal. "Call for the Orders of the Day" demands a return to the agenda.

Examples of Motions

Several misunderstood motions will be handled with ease with a parliamentary notebook:

Purpose: To end debate and vote immediately.	
Category: Subsidiary	Interrupt: No
Second: Yes	Amend: No
Debate: No	Vote: 2/3
Previous Question	

"Previous Question", a motion to end debate, requires a second and a 2/3 vote. Why? Because it curtails members' right to debate. And it certainly makes no sense to debate a motion to end debate.

Purpose: To suppress action.	
Category: Subsidiary	Interrupt: No
Second: Yes	Amend: No
Debate: Yes and on motion	Vote: Majority
Postpone Indefinitely	

This motion is a stalking horse used by the opposition to the main motion. If it passes those opposed have rid themselves of the Main, if it does not then they need to seek more votes. By using "Postpone Indefinitely" as a test, they don't risk losing on the Main bill or resolution. "Postpone Indefinitely" is nothing like "Postpone to a Time Certain" which insures the return to the floor of a Bill or Resolution.

Purpose: To correct Parliamentary error.	
Category: Incidental	Interrupt: Yes
Second: No	Amend: No
Debate: No	Decision: Chair
Point of Order	

Purpose: To reverse the chair's decision.	
Category: Incidental	Interrupt: Yes
Second: Yes	Amend: No
Debate: No	Vote: Majority
Appeal a Decision of the Chair	

These two often abused motions allow a member to correct an ignorant P.O and control an arrogant one.

Conclusion

With a steno notebook, a scissors and a pen, you have created a most useful reference for congress sessions. Moreover, by filling in the pages in order of precedence you now know the order of motions. By adding to each page each motion's purpose and its key requirements, you understand what is required and why.

With the book and the thought used in its construction, memorization is unnecessary. You have a basic conceptual background and a handy guide to look up technicalities. You are prepared for Congress!

(Mr. Copeland was one of 13 \$8,000 Scholarship winners at the Alexander Hamilton Bi Centennial Constitutional Convention held in the summer of 1957 in Independence Hall, Philadelphia. He also was elected Secretary General at the 1957 Hillside College MUNA. His student was President of the 1966 NFL Senate. Mr. Copeland is a Certified Parliamentarian.)

(Luong from Page 7)

Future Business Leaders of America, Future Farmers of America, The Junior Statesmen of America, Model United Nations, and YMCA Youth Legislature, to name a few, which all offer comprehensive training and practice in legislative and congressional debating events.

The new National Congress format proposed by Harold C. Keller, Clerk of the NFL Congress, and adopted by the NFL Executive Council appears on pages 14 and 15 in this issue of the *Ros-trum*. Mr. Keller's dedication to the activity is clearly evident and his improvements represent another significant step in advancing the development of Student Congress as a leadership training event. This widens the difference between local and national competition, however, and it is the hope of the authors that the suggestions in this essay might promote additional refinements at the local and state levels to keep pace with the advancements in the John C. Stennis National Student Congress.

The National Forensic League, in its mission to "Train Youth for Leadership," should take the initiative by serving as the lead developer and clearinghouse for Student Congress training materials as well as provide leadership to promote some degree of uniformity in Student Congress across the nation. Unlike single-focus organizations, the National Forensic League has so much to offer student leaders--they can enjoy a superior experience in congressional debate while at the same time benefit from participating in all the other NFL events.

The authors consider a nationwide commitment to Student Congress as the essential cornerstone to any strategy which will keep the National Forensic League as the leader among many outstanding educational organizations.

About the authors:

Minh A. Luong is a former high school and university forensics coach who served as Chairperson of the Department of Speech and Communication Studies at Pinewood College Preparatory School (CA), Director of Debate at San Francisco State University, and Director of Forensics at the University of California at Berkeley. Mr. Luong serves as Professor of Political Communication and was an academic director in charge of the Congressional Workshop Program in the Junior Statesmen Foundation of America's JSA Summer Schools.

Mary Menzik Moulton is Director of Forensics at Uintah High School in Vernal, Utah. She also served as Regional Instructor for the YMCA Youth Legislature and was responsible for training regional teams in Parliamentary Procedure and bill writing for the state event. She also served as Chief Parliamentarian in the State YMCA Youth Legislature. Ms. Moulton served as a legislative intern and speech writer/researcher in the Idaho State Legislature for the chairman of the Health, Education and Welfare Committee.