

The Meeting Will Come to Order

By **Harold Sponberg***

Community groups and similar organizations often misunderstand the real function of good parliamentary practice. Its purpose is not to inject unnecessary formality into a meeting, nor is it to prevent a free expression of opinion.

Used properly, parliamentary procedure is one of the most effective means by which individuals can take orderly action as a group. By using it properly, your group can give full consideration to any matter of common interest, encourage common-sense minority discussion on each question in its turn, then act according to the will of the majority—all with a minimum waste of time.

There are certainly some sound reasons then why you should acquire a good working knowledge of parliamentary procedure. For many years the Cooperative Extension Service of Michigan State University has provided clinics for organization officers. Now this bulletin can help both officers and members understand the basic parliamentary rules.

This bulletin is intended as a brief and convenient guide, primarily for use in the meetings of your community groups. It does not presume to cover the entire field of parliamentary law. For the more complex parliamentary problems you are referred to such standard handbooks as Robert's "Rules of Order."

BEFORE THE MEETING

If you are chairman, check the arrangement of chairs and tables before the meeting starts, striving for informality and friendliness. Have a table for yourself and the secretary, so you can work cooperatively before the group. Whenever possible, arrange the chairs in a semi-circle, close enough to your table so the group can hear you easily. Finally, check again on the program for the meeting, and check on the presence of those members who are scheduled to give reports.

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