

# How the Conference Operates

Generally speaking, the General Service Conference follows *Robert's Rules of Order*, and proceeds on an informal basis as possible consistent with the rights of all concerned. It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Conference to conduct its business; rules exist to allow the Conference to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Fellowship by reaching an informed group conscience. Over the years the Conference has adopted some exceptions to *Robert's Rules*, which help it to proceed more closely in accord with the spirit of A.A. Tradition.

## Conference Quorum

A Conference quorum — two-thirds of all registered members — is required to conduct Conference business.

## Committee System

To the extent possible, important matters to come before the Conference will be handled via the "Committee system." This assures that a large number of questions can be dealt with during Conference week. Members are encouraged to trust the process. Each Committee has considered carefully the items before it and presents its recommendations to the Conference as a whole for acceptance or rejection. Recommendations of Conference committees are automatically motions that have been made and seconded. Members are asked to refrain from spontaneously amending the work of the Committee; there are no "friendly" amendments under Robert's Rules.

## Substantial Unanimity

All matters of policy (Conference Advisory Actions) require substantial unanimity, that is, a *two-thirds majority*. Any actions, including amendments, that affect an Advisory Action, or motions that might result in such an action, also require a *two-thirds majority*. Because the number of members present in the hall during the week of Conference varies from time to time, the phrase "two-thirds majority" is taken to mean two-thirds vote of the Conference members voting, as long as the total vote constitutes a Conference quorum.

## Minority Opinion

After each vote on a matter of policy, the side which did not prevail will always be given an opportunity to speak to their position. If the motion passes with two-thirds vote, the minority may speak. If the motion receives a majority vote, but fails to pass for lack of a two-thirds vote, the majority may speak.

Remember that saving "minority opinions" for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is a time-waster, for it can force the Conference body to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around if it had been thoroughly examined from all sides.

## General Rules of Debate and Voting

*(Agreed to at the beginning of each Conference)*

- People who wish to speak line up at the microphones and address their comments to the chair.
- Each person may speak for two (2) minutes.
- No one may speak for a second time on a topic until all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
- Full discussion of a recommendation should take place before each vote.
- Everyone is entitled to express his or her opinion. However, if your perspective has already been stated by someone else, it is not necessary to go to the mike and say it again.
- Our experience is that premature actions such as amend-

ing motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question can divert attention from the subject at hand, confusing and/or delaying Conference business.

## Motions Made During Conference

When making a motion, come to the microphone and address the chair. There are various types of motions we use to help reach an informed group conscience. The specific rules governing each are on the next page.

## Tabling a Motion

Tabling a motion postpones discussion to a later time during the same Conference.

## Motion to Recommit

The motion to recommit returns a motion or proposal to the respective trustees' committee or appropriate corporate board for further consideration. A motion to recommit must be seconded, is debatable and can be amended.

## Calling the Question

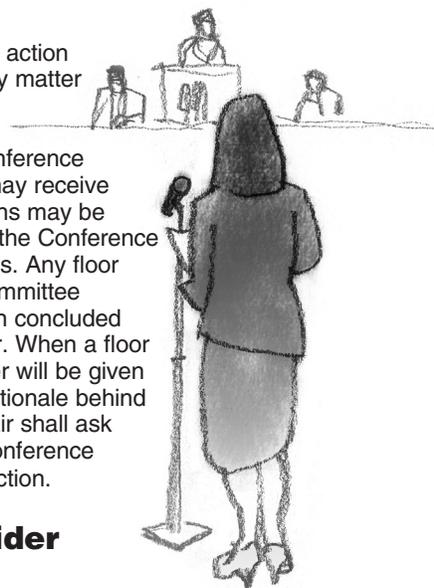
Calling the question brings debate to a halt while Conference members decide whether to proceed directly to a vote (the question) or go on with the debate.

## Reconsideration

A motion to reconsider a vote may be made only by a member who voted with the prevailing side, but it can be seconded by anyone. If the majority votes to reconsider, full debate, pro and cons, is resumed.

## Floor Actions

It is possible for a Conference action to come from the floor, but any matter which falls within the scope of a Conference committee ought first go through that Conference committee, so that the topic may receive due consideration. Floor actions may be introduced at any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions. Any floor action regarding a piece of committee business that has not yet been concluded will be considered out of order. When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action.



## Declining to Consider a Floor Action

A motion to decline to consider a floor action is made without comment.

# Summary of Conference Procedures

## Remember:

- Motions must be made in order at the microphone.
- Address motions to the chair.

MOTION		Requires a "Second"?	Is Debatable?	Vote Required for Approval	Minority Voice Heard?
<b>Committee Recommendation</b>	Presented in the committee report.	Automatically seconded	YES	Two-thirds	YES
<b>Amending a Motion</b>	A motion on the floor is owned by the entire Conference body, no longer by the Committee which recommended it.  The committee is not asked to vote on the motion to amend; any motion to amend a main motion depends on the approval of the Conference.	YES	YES	Two-thirds	YES
<b>Tabling a Motion</b>	Made without comment.	YES	NO	Simple Majority	NO
<b>Moving to Recommit</b>	Made without comment.	YES	YES	Two-thirds	NO
<b>Calling the Question</b>	Made without comment.	YES	NO	Two-thirds	NO
<b>Reconsidering a Vote</b>	May only be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side.  No action may be reconsidered twice.	YES  May be seconded by either side.	NO	Simple Majority	NO
<b>Making a Floor Action</b>	Made without comment.  Introduced any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions.  Is submitted in writing by the maker to the Conference secretary.	YES	YES	Two-thirds	YES
<b>Declining to Consider a Floor Action</b>	Made without comment.  May be made after the maker of a floor action is provided time to state the rationale for it.	YES	NO	Two-thirds	NO