

PARLIAMENTARY LAW, AS APPLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MASONIC BODIES.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF SPECIAL ORDERS.

The most common class of privileged questions in parliamentary assemblies is that to which is technically given the name of "orders of the day." When the consideration of any matter is, by a motion, postponed to a certain day, the matter so assigned is called, when the day for its consideration arrives, the special order for that day.

By this act the order of the day becomes a privileged question, and takes precedence of all others. The parliamentary regulations which refer to this question are numerous and intricate, but very few of them have any application to Masonic Lodges or Chapters.

For instance, in all parliamentary assemblies the business is distributed by certain rules, which cannot easily be set aside. Thus public motions are to be considered on one certain day of the week; private ones on another. A certain day is directed to be devoted to the consideration of petitions, a fourth one to appropriations, and so on; so that the class of business which is arranged for one day cannot be discussed on another, unless the rule is suspended. Now, to make any question a special order for the day, and to give it precedence on that day over all other questions—over in fact the very class of questions that has been appropriated to that particular day—would be to violate the rules of the house. And therefore it has been decided that, when any proposition is made an order for a subsequent day, it is to be considered that the rules for that occasion have been suspended. But a rule cannot be suspended by the vote of a mere majority. A vote of two-thirds is required for that purpose; and therefore, to make any question a special order, it is necessary that two-thirds of the members should vote in favor of the proposition, although, when the special order comes up, a bare majority may postpone its consideration.

No such rule has been established in Masonry. A majority vote only is necessary in a Lodge or Grand Lodge to make any hour or day the special time for the consideration of any proposition; or, in other words, to make it the special order for that hour or day.

The limited period appropriated to the communication of a Lodge makes it very unusual to adopt the practice of special orders; although a proposition introduced in the early part of the evening might be, and sometimes is, made the special order for a later hour. But the protracted session of a Grand Lodge or Grand Chapter often gives rise to special orders; and therefore the parliamentary rules that govern them, so far as they are applicable to Masonic bodies, must be considered.

The proper form of making any proposition a special order is as follows: On the presentation of any proposition, whether it be a motion, a petition, an election, or any other substantive matter, which it is then proposed to discuss, any member may rise and say, "I move that this motion—or whatever else it may be—be made the special order for 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning," or any other hour and day that he may select. This motion, being seconded, is put by the presiding officer, and, if adopted by a majority of votes, it becomes the special order for that hour and day.