

Lodge can suspend any of its rules or laws except by superior authority. But the decision of Grand Master French and its approval by the Grand Encampment give to Commanderies the power of suspending the rule, which requires a ballot on a petition, and under the suspension of withdrawing it. But as no rule can be suspended except by general consent, unless otherwise provided by another rule, it follows that a withdrawal of a petition, which, as I have said, is to be considered in the character of a suspension of a rule, can only be done by general consent—that is, by a unanimous vote. And this is in better accord with the dignity of the subject; for if a Commandery were permitted by a mere majority vote to evade the responsibility of deciding on the character and qualifications of its candidates and to throw it on some other Commandery, to which, by this withdrawal, the candidate would be permitted to apply, much evil might, it is evident, arise, and much injury be inflicted on the Order.

I do not for a moment doubt that the withdrawal of petitions for initiation is contrary to the spirit of the Masonic institution, and I regret that any decision was ever made, from the loose terms of which the implied power of withdrawal can be extorted. But as this decision has been made the law of Templarism, all that can now be done is to guard and restrict its exercise by the most rigid interpretation. I therefore conclude that a motion to withdraw a petition for membership in a Commandery may be entertained, but can be decided in the affirmative only by a unanimous vote.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF QUESTIONS ON SUSPENDING A RULE.

There is a recognized power in all deliberative bodies to suspend any one of their rules for the purpose of considering propositions or transacting business which would be, under the general rule, out of order and not admissible.

It is a general principle of parliamentary law, that anything may be done by general consent, and therefore any rule may be suspended at any time by a unanimous vote. But under certain circumstances, provided by the rules themselves, a rule may be suspended by a simple vote of the majority.

Hence, if the constitution of a Grand Lodge or the by-laws of a subordinate Lodge include a system of rules of order in which there is a provision for their suspension by unanimous consent or by the vote of a majority of those present, it will be in order to move such suspension, which motion is not debatable, nor subject to amendment, nor can it be laid on the table nor postponed indefinitely, but must be brought to a direct vote; nor, having been lost, can it be renewed for the same purpose; nor, having been adopted, can it be reconsidered.

But it must be remembered that all this refers, so far as a Masonic body is concerned, only to such rules as contain a provision for their suspension. Where there is no clause in the constitution or by-laws which prescribes that a particular rule may be suspended and directs the mode of suspension, a motion to suspend would be out of order and could not be entertained.

It refers also only to sure rules of order, for it is now universally admitted by Masonic jurists that a subordinate Lodge has no power to suspend its by-laws. But on this subject I have written so fully in my