

OVER RULED

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When Henry M. Robert, a young Army lieutenant, first wrote his *Robert's Rules* as a result of a frustrating experience in trying to conduct a church meeting, he could hardly have anticipated that 86 years later his descendants would still be living on income derived from the continuing sales of millions of copies of this handy manual. Whether he ever would have considered publishing it, had he had the unnerving experience of participating in the parliamentary chaos of a Muscogee County Medical Society business meeting, is extremely doubtful.

Over the years this innocent booklet has been the cause of countless numbers of meetings in this country degenerating into shouting confusions as hectic as any selling panic on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. In spite of holding this book in almost holy reverence, doctor groups, along with PTAs and Ladies Garden Clubs, seem particularly susceptible to the perils of parliamentary procedure. The frequent result of their intimidation by *Robert's Rules* is that the purpose of their meetings is often forgotten in the ensuing wild hassles over procedure, and that little is ever accomplished beyond the ruffling of a few tempers and the appointment of a new committee or two.

At this moment in hundreds of hot meeting halls, hundreds of determined index fingers are being waggled aloft, as hundreds of smugly knowledgeable, annoyingly authoritative, amateur parliamentarians are rising, Mr. Chairman, to a Point of Order. At this very moment, too, thousands of weary, impatient, exasperated club members are inching silently and hopefully toward the nearest exit, ready to bolt for freedom and home at the first opportunity.

Recently a small group of unorthodox PTA officers, intelligent ladies who had mistakenly assumed that the purpose of their meeting was to promote communication and further relationships and understandings between teachers and parents, planned and conducted a highly successful meeting at which they bypassed a few of the sacred rituals and put on a program which gently satirized and poked mild fun at the PTA itself.

In due time they received a two-and-a-half page, single-spaced, typewritten admonition from one of their own former PTA presidents, now risen to greater heights in the PTA Council hierarchy. Their unamused Councilor pointed out several glaring lapses of proper parliamentary protocol and indicated that great embarrassment had been caused, while despairing of the damage done to the prestige of the local Council in the eyes of the higher echelons of PTA organization.

The corresponding secretary of the reprimanded PTA group, replied politely to this letter in a few, concisely contrite, carefully worded paragraphs. Her answer contained one bit of wisdom so sound, that we feel it should be passed on to all those medical politicians so addicted to the letter of *Robert's Rules*:

. . . It is the consensus of our Board, that parliamentary rules are a means to an end, and not an end within themselves.

Since all of the ladies involved on both sides of this incident happen to be patients of ours, Mr. Chairman, we should like to rise at this time to a Question of Privilege and request that the Recording Secretary strike from his minutes all of the foregoing remarks and any implications thereof and ask it be clearly emphasized that the recounting of this story is in no way intended to reflect upon the sincerity or integrity of PTA organizations or womankind in general, all of whom we admire greatly.

Do we hear a motion for adjournment?