CONCLUSION OF SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

Subsidiary motions are always considered in order of their rank or order of precedence. *Review the stepladder chart.* When a subsidiary motion is pending, any motion above it in rank is in order; any motion below it in rank is out of order.

Example

- It has been moved that the motion regarding the construction of a playground be referred to an ad hoc committee of five to be appointed by the president and to report back at the next meeting.
- The motion to amend is out of order. It is of lower rank than commit. Practically speaking, why should the group waste time amending a motion that is going to a committee for study?
- The motion to postpone is in order. It is of higher rank than commit. It might serve the interests of the group to postpone the entire question until the next meeting. (Perhaps tempers are hot and the group hopelessly divided. Time can often soften and heal.)

POSTPONE INDEFINITELY AND LAY ON THE TABLE

The careful reader or student of Robert will have noticed that the lowest-ranked subsidiary motion, **postpone indefinitely**, and the highest-ranked subsidiary motion, **lay on the table**, have been omitted from the chart on page 49 and the subsequent discussion.

The author has omitted these motions deliberately. This book is designed as a practical and elementary guide to the commonly used and essential motions. The

rarely used postpone indefinitely and usually misused lay on the table were considered unsuitable for this work.

Briefly, postpone indefinitely, the lowest-ranked subsidiary motion, is a motion to *kill* a main motion. It avoids a direct vote on the question on the floor. I call it the "straw vote" motion. It can be used to test the strength of a motion that a faction opposes. It was designed as a courtesy motion, to prevent a direct vote on a question that might be embarrassing to the group. I have never seen it used in a group other than a parliamentary organization.

Conversely, lay on the table, the highest-ranked subsidiary motion, is generally misunderstood and misused by the public. The motion is frequently made that the group "table the motion" with the intent that the group clear the floor and "get rid of" the motion.

Lay on the table was also designed as a courtesy motion, allowing a group to set aside a question for something more important, such as the arrival of a speaker. Because this motion has the highest rank, it cannot be amended or debated.

Lay on the table is *out of order* when used to "kill or avoid dealing with a measure." (*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, p. 208.)

Example

Back at the Green Acres Association, during discussion of the proposal to construct a playground, a member rises and says, "I MOVE TO TABLE THE MOTION."

The presiding officer should ask, "IS IT YOUR INTENT TO KILL OR DISPOSE OF THE MOTION REGARDING THE PLAYGROUND?"

If the answer is "YES," the presiding states, "THAT MOTION IS OUT OF ORDER."

Had the member moved to "TABLE THE MOTION UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING," the presiding officer would have realized that the member's intent was to use the motion to postpone and would have handled it accordingly.

9

Privileged Motions

Privileged motions are not related to the business on the floor, but to the rights of members and the organization. They are of such importance that they have the right to interrupt business. Because of their high privilege, they are *undebatable.*

Privileged motions have rank among themselves and take precedence over all other motions.

Order of Rank from Lowest to Highest

Questions of privilege
Recess
Adjourn

QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

Questions of privilege relate to the rights of the organization or any of its members. The motion enables a member to interrupt business on the floor to state an urgent request. It is in order only when the comfort, dig-