

Evolution of Senate Procedure Baker's Rules of Order

While attending the Senate meeting of Feb 19th a question was prompted and lay heavy on my mind. This question arose from the controversial issue concerning Senate procedure and the translation of the University Act. On assuming the duties of Speaker of the U.P.E.I.S.U. I became obligated to follow, under constitutional procedure, Roberts Rules of Order except where ammended by the constitution of the Student.

This provides a more or less stable pattern of procedure set down in black and white, for me, in my duties as chairman to follow. This as well provides council members a basic guide under which they themselves might operate. If I in my duties as Speaker deviate either by a personal value judgement, malicous choice or mistake, from these rules, I can and should be brought to account and justly so. This can be done by complaint to the Student Judiciary Committee where the issue can be examined and just action taken. I realize that rules are not simply cut and dried and do not have to have interpretation. However there must be some guidelines to follow and these guidelines should be

documented. I as well assumed that Senate too had the same basic guidelines to follow except where the University Act is substituted in place of the Student Union Constitution as is natural in such a case.

In conversing with President Baker following last weeks Senate meeting I found much to my dismay that this is not the case.

When U.P.E.I. was founded six years ago there was held in accordance with the University Act (the body of rules wich govern the University) the first Senate meeting. Senate at its first meeting found itself without a chairman and in true democratic form President Baker was voted to the chair. As I have previously stated, there was neither at the time, nor are there now any written rules which to guide Senate procedure.

On assuming the duties as chairman Mr. Baker being an experienced hand in such matters, proceeded to chair the meeting according to his own best value judgments. When a dispute on procedure arose the point in question was put to vote before the Senate members and was decided on by majority concensus. This method became the standard mechanism by which Senate

procedure evolved. As each dispute on procedure arose it was handled in the aforementioned manner.

Issues once thus decided became with usage the basic rules of Senate. Over a period of time a number of such rules accumulated and thus these rules provided a precedent by which Mr, Baker chaired the meetings.

However the point which so distressed me was the fact that in six years of Senate meetings, not one of these rules have been put in writing. Nowhere in the University is there to be found a documented copy of said rules which dictate Senate procedure and thus the heartbeat of Senate itself. These rules in the sense that they formulated the basic modus operandi of Senate, thus in turn are the life line of a great majority of decisions which affect the way in which this university itself is to function.

According to the University Act, section 24(2) the office of elected members shall be three years; however each is eligible for re-election. The only faculty member to be re-elected is Regus Duffy. The only other repeaters are Merritt Crocket the university librarian, President Baker and Mike Hennessy the

university registrar. Out of twenty non-student senators only four have been there since the beginning. Student representatives have one year terms and thus in six years there have been six student members for each seat. There is the rare exception of student reelection.

Thus there are only the four aforementioned members who have served the full six years and thus have had exposure to all the so called "rules" of Senate.

As I have previously stated each Student Union Council member has only to refer to the constitution or Roberts Rules and he has readily at hand the basis for challenging the chair which I as speaker hold. However in Senate this is not the case. This ability to question procedure is not only improbable but is next to impossible unless directly specified in the University Act. Any one familiar with the Act will automatically recognize how vague its stipulations are.

President Baker also mentioned the tremendous power of the chair. This I myself am familiar with as I have the ability to interpret the S.U. constitution. I as well expose the restrictions under which I must operate ie. Roberts Rules and the S.U. constitution. What about President Baker and the Senate. The University Act which is in relation to senate operations more than vague handful of unwritten undocumented laws known in totality to only four members of a 26 man Senate.

Ask again why the last Senate meeting ended in the fiasco it did! Power in the University when it was founded was directed to various channels and due to a submissive, complacent group of people the judgments of a few have directed the ends of many. It is time now after six years of operation that the whole University Power structure be reexamined and re-directed where and when necessary. The last Senate meeting was just the first light of this realization. With each passing day more and more people both faculty and students are beginning to realize this. The Holocaust is burning to an end and with it the concentration of mis-directed ill-guided power.

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