

Voter's Legislative Report

(This is the fifth in a series of articles regarding legislative procedure and organization taken from The Oregon Voter.)

COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

Under the Oregon constitution, no committee may close the doors on attendance at its meetings except under specific authorization of the house of which it is a committee. We recall no occasion when this authorization has been granted. The prevailing practice of exclusion from the executive sessions of committees would seem to be a breach of this provision of the constitution, but as conducted, it simply is an intimidation by the committee of all who dislike to offend by remaining present after the chairman announces "the committee will now go into executive session."

Custom has developed to have all committee meetings open to attendance by representatives of the press, but there are not enough press representatives to cover all the meetings. Hence much of the committee work is done without the public being informed as to what is happening. It also is a custom to have committee meetings open for hearings and then closed, except to the press, for consideration of what was brought up at the public hearing. This practice has its drawbacks, as in so-called "executive session" points are raised that could be discussed capably only by the citizens who have been excluded from the meeting and, in many cases, have left for home, very often disgruntled at having been dismissed from the meeting. It is not unusual for committees in executive session to agree upon and report out bills in form that is opposed by many who attend hearings and then were dismissed. The first that is known by the citizens is a text which is far from meeting their needs. So, then demands for reconsideration are turned in, the committee (if not too obstinate or self-willed) gets the bill re-referred back, has another open session, followed by another executive session, which is attended by the presence of the interested citizens, again reports out a bill in form that has vital

defects, or is otherwise unsatisfactory.

This kind of procedure has happened over and over again, and has delayed sessions. A better plan would be for the committee to request those who were heard by it to remain in the room for questioning on further points as raised by the committee members in their consideration. Some members object to this because they think they will be interrupted. Some object because they do not want to be overheard making arguments for which their home folks might criticize them; others hate to expose their ignorance.

Committees meet on schedules which are arranged in advance by conference and are published in the daily calendar. The chairman usually reminds by announcing from the floor of his house at the close of each daily meeting. In his announcement he may state what bill or subject will be considered. The chairman may call special meetings or hearings.

A majority of the membership of each committee constitutes a quorum. As soon as the chairman is satisfied that enough of them who can attend are present, he calls the committee to order. As chairman he selects the bill or bills to be submitted for consideration at that meeting and submits each in the order he chooses. The larger the committee, the more from the procedure.

In the largest committees minutes are kept by the clerk. Some of the clerks are highly competent and keep excellent minutes. Copies of these minutes are turned over to the chairman, who usually retains them. Joint ways and means committee minutes are filed with the secretary of state, as they set forth conditions and understandings formally adopted as they relate to budget policy and budget items. In many committees no minutes are kept.

In all committees the clerk prepares in triplicate the committee report on each bill, with amendments if any. The chairman signs the report, noting non-concurrence, if any, on request of dissenting members. If there is a minority report, the clerk likewise prepares it in triplicate,

and each copy is signed by the minority members.

Both minority and majority reports go together to the desk of the house to which the committee belongs and both are read when the order of business is for committee reports. The motion first considered is for the adoption of the majority report, but before that is put, the motion is considered to substitute the minority report for the majority report. If the motion for the minority report prevails, the bill in that form goes on the calendar. If the minority motion fails, the bill goes on the calendar in the form approved by the majority. Occasionally, when debate has cleared the issues, the rules are suspended, the bill is considered "engrossed" (that term is another archaism; its meaning was "to write the bill in large formal handwriting" when it is ready to be acted upon), which now means that its text is rewritten to include any amendments that have been adopted; the bill is given its third reading, and the roll is called on its passage.

Similar action may be taken under suspension of the rules upon any committee report if immediate passage is desired in the interest of early enactment into law to meet an emergency or, late in the session in anticipation of final adjournment.

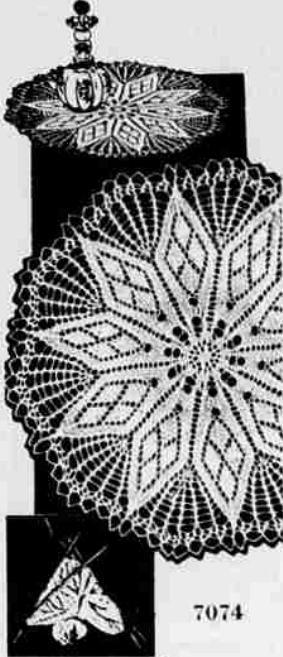
Under the rules, the bills originated and introduced by joint ways and means committee automatically are advanced on the calendar without being referred. Under suspension of the rules, similar action may be had on bills introduced by other committees.

In neither house is a second required for a motion by a member. In committees of both houses it is the custom to require a second to be made to a motion by a committee member. This has been found convenient in committee meetings, as for lack of a second many a motion can be disposed of without consuming precious time for consideration and action.

(Tomorrow—Records of committee meetings, and suggestions and recommendations.)

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Alice Brooks

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Museum Progress Told At Meeting Historical Group

Detailed reports of progress in transforming the old Jacksonville courthouse into a museum were given the Southern Oregon Historical Society, Inc., at the organization's monthly meeting in the courthouse here last evening.

According to A. C. VanGelder, chairman of the society's building committee, the plaster and painting jobs will be completed and floor covering laid so that moving in of displays may start about May 1. He explained that it had been found necessary to rewire the old structure which delayed plastering, and that when the plasterers went to work they discovered much of the old plaster was ready to drop off and had to be renewed.

Landscaping Planned Miss Claire Hanley, president of the society, reported that there is hope of securing help from the state highway commission in landscaping the museum grounds inasmuch as they are located on a state highway and will be a major tourist attraction for Oregon. She also told members that five attractive highway signs, measuring four by seven feet, have been donated by John Lister of the House of Mystery for placement at strategic points on highways leading to Jacksonville, as a means of helping to advertise the museum.

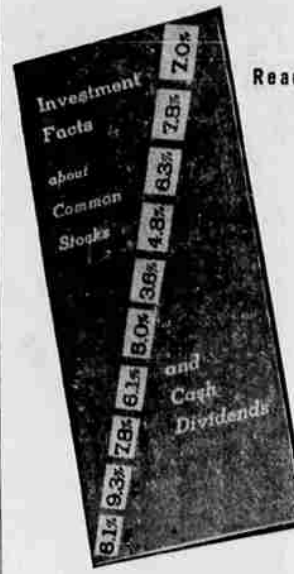
Miss Hanley said part of the window coverings for the museum had been provided by the gift of a number of curtains and rods by Mrs. A. E. Brockway of Medford.

The Lions club of Jacksonville has requested the Historical society to hold official dedication of the museum at the time of the annual Jacksonville Gold Rush

Jubilee. According to tentative plans many state dignitaries will join with members of the Jackson county court and representatives of southern Oregon cities, in the ceremony.

Salem, Ore., Mar. 15—U.P.—Russell Trip of Albany, Ore., student body president at Willamette university, has been chosen as one of 26 students in this country by Rotary International to receive scholarships for study abroad.

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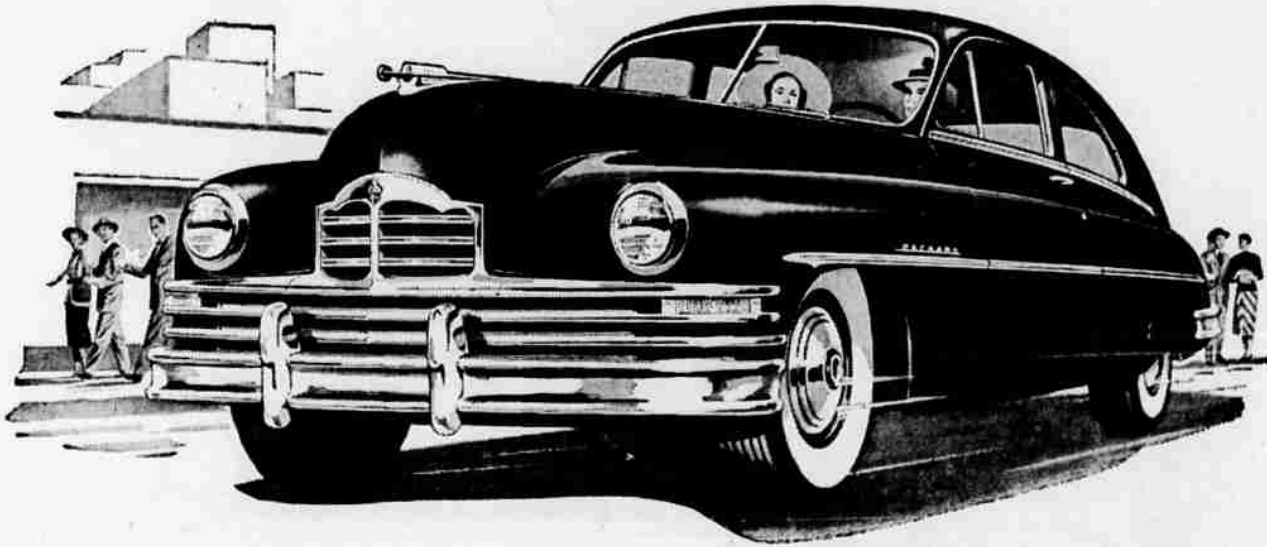
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