



FRANK REED HORTON MEMORIAL LODGE NO. 379, F. & A. M.

UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Capitol Masonic Temple, Matalino St., Central Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

Lecture No. 1 **BALLOTING OF CANDIDATES**

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By: VW Antonio C. Zeta

Excerpts from Albert Mackey's "Principles of Masonic Law" and "Jurisprudence of Freemasonry"

The committee having reported favorably on a petition referred to it, the next step in the process is to submit the petition to the members of the Lodge for their acceptance or rejection.

- A. The law upon which this usage is founded is contained in the sixth article of the General Regulations of 1721; which declares –
“no man can be entered a Brother in any particular Lodge, or admitted a member thereof, without the unanimous consent of all the members of the Lodge then present when the petitioner is proposed, and their consent is formally asked by the Master.”
- B. While no particular mode of expressing this opinion in any of the ancient Constitutions. The same sixth article goes on to say that the members –
“are to signify their consent or dissent in their own prudent way, either virtually or in form, but with unanimity.”
- C. Universal and continuous usage has required the votes on the application of the petitioner to be taken by ballot because thereby the secrecy and consequent independence of the election is secured.

Mode of Balloting

- A. Our written laws are altogether silent as to the peculiar ceremonies which are to accompany the act of balloting, which has therefore been generally directed by the local usage of different jurisdictions.
- B. For the solemnity of our ritual, the Ritual Law provides for the manner of balloting as contained in the Monitor.
- C. Our Constitution also provides for this manner in Art. VI, Secs. 17 through 20.
- D. The Master gives a charge to the members of the Lodge about to vote by reading Edict No. 83 – Puno.

Three considerations of Balloting

A. The ballot must be **UNANIMOUS**.

- The unanimity of the ballot has the sanction of the expressed words of the sixth article of the General Regulations of 1721; which declares that no one can be admitted into a Lodge upon his application for membership as a Freemason, or for initiation as a profane, "*without the unanimous consent of all the members of the Lodge then present ...*"
- Harmony may be seriously impaired by the admission of a candidate contrary to the wishes of one member; for every man have his friends or influence.
- It is unjust to any member, however humble he may be, to introduce among his associates one whose presence might be unpleasant to him, and whose admission might probably compel him to withdraw from the meetings, or even altogether from the Lodge.
- Such a forced admission would not accrue an advantage for the Lodge; for while receiving a new and untried member into its fold, the Lodge would be losing an old one.
- It also follows that "*all members then present*" are under obligation to vote. From the discharge of this duty, no one can be permitted to shrink.
- No one can be exempted from the performance of this responsible act, except by unanimous consent of the Lodge, to comply with the words and spirit of the law.

B. The ballot must be **INDEPENDENT**.

- Independence of all responsibility is an essential ingredient in the exercise of the ballot.
 - 1) A Freemason is responsible to no human power for a vote that he casts on the petition of a candidate.
 - 2) To his conscience alone is he to answer for the motives that have led to the act, and for the act itself.
 - 3) It is, of course, wrong, in the exercise of this invaluable right, to be influenced by pique or prejudice; or by an adverse vote, to indulge an ungenerous feeling.
- No Mason can be called to an account for the vote that he has deposited.
 - 1) The motives of men, unless divulged by themselves, can be known only to God.
 - 2) "*If from any circumstances we are led to entertain any doubts of the motives of men, we are bound to retain these doubts within our own bosoms.*"

- The right of a Lodge to judge of whom it shall admit to its membership is an “inherent privilege” and it is expressly said that it is not “subject to a Dispensation.”
 - 1) Members are themselves the best judges of the particular reasons for admission or rejection.
 - 2) If an objectionable person is thrust upon them, contrary to their wishes, the harmony of the Lodge may be impaired, or even its continuance hazarded.
- And in all cases where a member himself has no personal or acquired knowledge of the qualifications of the petitioner, he should rely upon and be governed by the recommendation of his Brethren of the Committee of Investigation, who he has no right to suppose would make a favorable report on the petition of an unworthy applicant.

C. The ballot must be **SECRET**.

- Secrecy is as essential to a ballot’s perfection as unanimity or its independence.
 - 1) If a vote were to be given viva voce, by spoken words, it is impossible that improper influences of fear or interest should not sometimes be exerted.
 - 2) Timid members may thus be induced to vote contrary to the dictates of their reason or conscience.
 - 3) To secure this secrecy and protect the purity of choice, it has been a wisely established usage that the vote shall be taken by a ballot, but that there be no subsequent discussion of the subject.
- No member has a right to inquire how his fellows have voted; and it is wholly out of order for him to explain his own vote.
 - 1) If a member has a right to rise and announce that he deposited a white ball; then every other member has the same right.
 - 2) In a Lodge of 20 members where an application is rejected by one black ball, if 19 state they did not deposit it, the inference is clear that the 20th Brother has done so, and thus secrecy of the ballot is at once destroyed.
- The rejection having been announced from the chair, the Lodge should immediately proceed to other business.
 - 1) It is the sacred duty of the presiding officer peremptorily and at once to check any rising discussion on the subject.
 - 2) Nothing must be done to impair the inviolable secrecy of the ballot.

Our Constitution upholds the secrecy and independence of Balloting in Article VI, Sec. 22 –

“ There shall be no discussion regarding an unfavorable ballot, and no member of the Lodge shall be required, requested or allowed to divulge his vote upon a ballot for affiliation or for the degrees of Masonry, nor to assign reasons for such vote, if it be known, except to the Master for the purpose of correcting a mistake ”

These considerations are also expressly enshrined in the charge given by the Worshipful Master to the Brethren who are about to ballot a candidate; as provided for in Art. VI, Sec. 19 of our Constitution –

“ One of your important privileges as a Mason is that of accepting or rejecting all who may apply for the degrees or for membership. I wish to impress upon your mind the immense power for good or evil with which you are entrusted. The white ball, secretly cast by you, signifies your approbation of any candidate who may apply, while the black one, when cast by you, signifies that the candidate is unworthy for some reason known to you, and will have the same effect as though each member of this lodge were to cast one of them. Hence, how important it is that you should be extremely careful in depositing your ballot, always remembering that white balls elect and black reject. The ballot, my brother, is inviolably secret, and you are cautioned that to discuss or make known your ballot is one of the greatest of Masonic offenses. The ballot is never the proper place to exhibit petty spite toward any individual within or without the lodge, and the ceremony attending the casting of a ballot is equivalent to a sacred promise to cast it in accordance with your obligation. ” Edict No. 83 - PUNO

Result of Balloting

- A. There are, unfortunately, some governed not by bad motives but by frail judgments and by total ignorance of the true object and design of Freemasonry, who never recourse to the black cube, that great bulwark of Masonry, and are almost always incensed when anyone judiciously exercises his privilege of excluding those whom he thinks unworthy of participation in our mysteries.
- That these men are not governed by motives essentially bad is the fact. They honestly desire the prosperity of the institution, and they would not willfully do one act which would impede that prosperity.
 - But their judgments are weak, and their zeal is without knowledge.
 - 1) They do not at all understand in what the true prosperity of the Order consists,
 - 2) but really and conscientiously believing that its actual strength will be promoted by the increase of the number of its disciples;
 - 3) they look rather to the *quantity* than to the *quality* of the applicants who knock at the doors of our lodges.

- B. Now a great difference in this respect will be found in those Lodges which are free from the presence of such injudicious brethren, and others into which they have gained admittance.

In a Lodge

- in which every member has a correct notion of the proper moral qualifications of the candidates for Masonry;
- where there is a general disposition to work well with a few, rather than to work badly with many;
 - 1) a ballot is ordered, each Brother, having deposited his vote, quietly and calmly waits to hear the decision of the ballot box announced by the Chair.
 - 2) If it is "clear," all are pleased that another citizen has been found worthy to receive a portion of the illuminating rays of Masonry.
 - 3) If it is "foul," each one is satisfied with the adjudication, and rejoices that, although knowing nothing himself against the candidate, some one has been present whom a more intimate acquaintance with the character of the applicant has enabled to interpose his veto, and prevent the purity of the Order from being sullied by the admission of an unworthy candidate.
 - 4) Here the matter ends, and the lodge proceeds to other business.

In a Lodge where one of these injudicious and over-zealous Brethren is present, how different is the scene:

- 1) If the candidate is elected, he, too, rejoices; but his joy is, that the lodge has gained one more member whose financial capacity will augment the Lodge revenues or whose position in society will eventually bring honor to the Lodge.
- 2) If he is rejected, he is indignant that the lodge has been deprived of this pecuniary accession or eventual honor.
- 3) Forthwith he sets to work to reverse, if possible, the decision of the first ballot, and by a volunteer defense of the rejected candidate, and violent denunciations of those who opposed him, he seeks to *alarm the timid* and *disgust the intelligent*, so that, on a reconsideration, they may be induced to withdraw their opposition.