



## UNW 17<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention Information for Delegates Delegate Series #6: THE CONVENTION CHAIRPERSON



People gathered together to debate and deliberate crucial issues can often get their business done more efficiently if someone “umpires” the proceedings. The UNW By-Laws stipulate that it is the union president who performs this function at the union’s Conventions by chairing all formal sessions.

Using as their authority the *Rules of Order* which are adopted by Convention, the chairperson:

- maintains order,
- ensures motions are properly moved and seconded,
- decides questions of order and procedure,
- calls for votes and announces results, amongst other duties.

Normally the chairperson does not take part in debate.

The “no debating” restriction on the chairperson is necessary to preserve their impartiality. The *Rules of Order* do permit the chairperson to temporarily vacate the Chair to debate a motion before Convention. When this occurs the chairperson may not resume the Chair until the matter under debate has been resolved by Convention.

The Convention chairperson is permitted to temporarily vacate the Chair for other reasons too. He/ She may vacate the chair to attend to other pressing matters related to the running of Convention. During any absence, the chairperson must appoint some other person to assume the responsibilities of the Chair. This delegation usually falls to the First Executive Vice-President or to another senior union officer.

**Following the Agenda** The Convention chairperson must follow the agenda as adopted by delegates, calling all business in the order prescribed. He/She helps ensure that Convention flows by insisting that amendments to motions are relevant and that debate is always directed to the matter under consideration. The chairperson must be impartial in all rulings and must not indicate in any way whatsoever her/his personal opinions on any matter before the Convention while occupying the Chair. If the chairperson fails to maintain impartiality, she/he may be called to order by the assembly.

**Addressing the Chairperson**  
As the presiding officer of Convention, the chairperson must be accorded respect and honour by all delegates. At union Conventions, “Sister Chairperson” or “Brother Chairperson” is the acceptable form to be used when speakers address the Chair.

**Point of Order:** If a delegate believes that the way Convention is proceeding is not in accordance with the *Rules of Order* as adopted by Convention, she/he can raise a “point of order” with the chairperson. In ruling on a point of order, the chairperson states the authority or practice on which their decision is based. No business shall be conducted after a point of order is raised until the chairperson makes a ruling. Any delegate who disputes a ruling by the Chair may rise to “challenge the Chair” and thereafter the Convention decides the question in dispute by a simple majority vote.

**Elections – Independent Chairperson** Finally, except as noted above, the only time the Convention chairperson vacates the Chair to participate in the proceedings of Convention is during the Election of Officers. Elections are conducted by an independent chairperson appointed for that specific purpose.

*The next issue in the series will be “THE CONVENTION COMMITTEES.”*