

UNW 17th Triennial Convention Information for Delegates Delegate Series #8: THE CONVENTION DEBATE



The formalized discussion about resolutions, motions or issues which takes place between Convention delegates is known as debate. Debate is presided over by the Convention chairperson who ensures it is conducted in a civil and orderly fashion, and that every delegate who wishes to speak to a question has an opportunity to do so.

Every delegate has the right to enter the debate on any motion. Delegates are entitled to express their opinions on debatable motions before convention without incurring the enmity or noisy objection of other delegates. It is appropriate to dispute a motion or the intent of a motion but it is forbidden to attack a delegate personally for a position they have taken.

It is customary, by adopting general rules of order which address the issue, or by a specific convention resolution, to limit the time delegates are allowed to present their views. Delegates who wish to speak are recognized in turn by the Chairperson. When a delegate is “given the floor”, no one may interrupt except to raise a point of order or of privilege.

Delegates may speak only once to a motion until all who wish to speak have done so. If either the mover or the seconder speaks for a second time, no further debate is permitted and a vote is taken immediately.

During debate, delegates should use the third person when addressing the comments of another delegate. Other delegates should be referred to by the use of such terms as: “The Committee Chairperson”, “The Mover of the Motion”, “A Previous Speaker”, or “The Sister/Brother from the Great Region of >>>>”. By referring to other delegates in this way, there is less risk that unintended personal attacks might happen. Everyone should work hard to avoid the degeneration of debate into personal exchanges or emotional disagreements.

Protocol....A convention delegate who wants to speak to an issue should stand and proceed to a microphone. After being recognized by the Chair, the delegate should address his/her remarks to the Convention chairperson. The delegate should first state their name, the Local they represent, and their reason for rising to speak. For example, “Sister Chairperson, I rise on a point of order” or “Brother Chairperson, I seek clarification on the Committee’s recommendation, and through you, ask the Committee...”



*John Doe, Local 42.
Brother Chairperson,
I wish to speak in
favour of the
motion....*

An important rule of debate is that **a delegate may not move a motion after they have spoken to an issue.** For example, a delegate may not speak against a Committee recommendation and then move to refer it back to the Committee. The delegate must forego the opportunity to speak and straight away present a motion to refer if that is their wish. After the motion is seconded, the delegate can present reasons for wanting the motion to be referred.

Generally speaking, any motion placed before the Convention is debatable. Certain “procedural” motions are exceptions.

Motions that are ***not debatable*** include motions:

- To adjourn,
- To appeal a ruling of the Chair (except that the Chair and appellant may explain their respective positions),
- To raise points of order or questions of privilege,
- To suspend the rules of order,
- To table or put a question,
- To move into committee of the Whole, or
- To postpone, refer, or reconsider a question (except that the advisability of the later three motions may be debated).



The next subject to be dealt with in this series will be "THE CONVENTION RULES OF ORDER"