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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

STANDARD CODE OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE. By Alice F. Sturgis. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950. Pp. XXV, 268. \$2.50.

Here is a handbook of parliamentary procedure that is more than a collection of tersely stated rules and abbreviated explanations. The author has spared nothing to give to her book the completeness and detail of its rival, Robert's *Rules of Order*.

There are three main divisions, a general discussion of the philosophy and method of parliamentary law, a detailed account of the setting up and operation of an organization, and finally a section devoted to full and complete explanations of each of the rules of parliamentary procedure.

Sturgis is organized both for quick reference and general study. The table of contents and the index are full and detailed, and the book is divided into forty-four short chapters, each chapter treating a specific subject. Typical chapters are 7, "Rules Governing Motions"; 16, "The Presiding Officer and His Duties"; and 27, "Motion to Postpone Indefinitely." In addition, Part Three is subdivided into the main classes of motions, so that the reader can see at a glance what he wants to read.

Inside the front cover may be found that table of motions which is indispensable for the presiding officer. The make-up of Mrs. Sturgis' table is such that a frustrated chairman would be unlikely to confuse one motion for another, as he sought for the proper ruling.

According to the author, this is the first time that a manual on parliamentary law "has been closely integrated with court decisions." For the most part this practice tends to give sharper meaning to the various rules and regulations cited, although many of the variations from commonly accepted practice which the author makes are not well supported by court decisions or other authority.

For example, Mrs. Sturgis' list of privileged motions includes only three, instead of the customary five. She cites a quotation from the rules of the U. S. House of Representatives to indicate that the motion to "fix the time to which to adjourn" is no longer valid because of its use in "obstructive tactics." Whether Mrs. Sturgis is correct or not in her contention is beside the point. This reliance upon a single citation is not sufficient ground for dismissing a rule which is found not in a single writing on parliamentary procedure but in at least three other works on the subject within arm's reach of the reviewer.

A similar criticism can be made of the author's failure to mention the "call for the orders of the day." Here, if the author is justified in omitting the privileged motion or in including it elsewhere, some attention should be given to supporting her stand.

On the other hand, certain variations from the accepted interpretations of parliamentary law are well supported. In discussing the motion to reconsider, Mrs. Sturgis backs up her contention that it is no longer necessary that this motion be

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made by a member who voted with the prevailing side, by citing both an older writer on the subject and by referring to the opinion of the courts.

Undoubtedly, Mrs. Sturgis has made a fine contribution to the literature on the subject of parliamentary procedure and the organization and conduct of business meetings. The language is clear and concise, yet full treatment is accorded most points. The question of whether or not the book will replace older studies on the subject must be left to the future for decision, but there is little doubt that it will find its place in the library of those who teach or utilize Parliamentary Law.

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