

is no magic in his office which enables him persistently to defy the will of the assembly; and this fact is the ultimate and sufficient restraint against serious usurpations of authority.

17. To Deal with Obstructive Procedure. — Occasions sometimes arise when the chairman, acting as the organ of the assembly and giving effect to its manifest will, must impose some restraint upon the abuse of parliamentary privileges by an unreasonable and obstructive minority which is seeking to prevent action by dilatory tactics. Of all the duties of a presiding officer this is probably the most difficult and calls for the greatest exercise of discretion. It is doubtless better to submit to some inconvenience than to interpose prematurely, and without due warrant in the general sentiment of the assembly; but when the case is manifest and notorious, an unscrupulous minority persistently thwarting the will of the majority by sheer abuse of privilege, the chairman should unhesitatingly rule out of order all merely dilatory motions, stating the reason. Ordinarily he should, in the first instance, allow an appeal (see Sec. 79) from this decision; but if he finds himself strongly supported by the assembly, he should thereafter decline to entertain further appeals of a similar nature, as being in themselves merely dilatory and obstructive. In assemblies very strictly conducted and made up of members well versed in their rights, he should wait for the question to be raised from the floor and may then refuse to entertain any appeal; but in assemblies of less experience it is commonly better for the chairman to take the initiative and proceed as above. Formerly parliamentary practice was peculiarly weak in this exigency, leaving the majority almost helpless in the hands of a stubborn minority, — which is a subversion of fundamental principles. At present the general practice concurs with common sense in this matter, and the presiding