

VOTING IN LODGE OR CHAPTER

There are two methods of decision-making in Open Lodge or Chapter, where all substantive decisions must be made with regard to Lodge or Chapter affairs. (*A Lodge/Chapter Committee has only an advisory capacity and may not take decisions*).

These methods are – **by show of hands** or **by ballot**.

THESE TWO METHODS ARE NOT RANDOMLY INTERCHANGEABLE at the whim of the Lodge or Chapter.

A: If the Rule in the *Book of Constitutions* relevant to the decision in hand employs the word '**ballot**' to indicate how that decision will be made, then that is the **ONLY** method which can be used. A ballot is **SECRET** and can only be conducted by use of a **BALLOT-BOX**. A show of hands cannot be substituted in such circumstances; however 'sure' Brethren may feel of the outcome of the vote.

B: If the *Book of Constitutions* does not stipulate a ballot, then a **show of hands** will suffice.

HOWEVER, Rule 155 makes it clear that the members of a Lodge/Chapter have the power to insist that any particular issue be decided by **ballot** if a majority of those present indicate, by a show of hands, that it should be. This would be appropriate where it was felt that Brethren might be embarrassed or inhibited from voting according to their conscience or desire, were a show of hands employed. *Any member present* can propose this course of action and, if seconded, a show of hands must then be taken to decide whether to employ a ballot.

With regard to the **MAJORITY** required to decide the issue, again it is necessary to see whether the *Book of Constitutions*, in a particular case, requires a majority either of those Brethren '*present*' or of those Brethren '*voting*', and what size that majority must be (a simple majority or a two-thirds majority). *There is no question in Freemasonry of proxy or postal voting to decide an issue.*

In the case of an equality of votes, the Master occupying the Chair on that occasion has a **DUTY** to give a second and casting vote in order to resolve the issue. He cannot leave the matter in the air.