

Dr Spock Calls the Meeting to Order

My name is Dr Lloyd Spock and the subject of tonight's lecture is *Healthy Meeting Procedure* or *How to Avoid Throwing out the Baby with the Bathwater*. Those of you with small children should be able to understand this better.

Running a meeting is really nothing to worry about; in fact, it's as simple as changing your baby's nappy. Changing your baby's nappy is really nothing to worry about - unless, of course, there are complications.

The first complication we shall look into - and indeed, the most common - is the passing of motions. In a normal healthy meeting, these should not be too frequent, nor too infrequent - we can't be absolutely dogmatic, here, but it is usual to have at least one and more than ten per meeting would give some cause for alarm.

Now, in a healthy meeting, the passing of motions is generally quite straightforward, and need not cause any consternation at all, but, regrettably, there are certain medical conditions, about which I should give you due warning.

The first of these is constipation - the passing of infrequent, dry, hard motions - which can be a rather painful condition for all concerned. The other extreme is not much better, I'm afraid. The passing of frequent, wet motions tends to make rather a mess of proceedings. However, you'll be relieved to know that, for most abnormalities - once you know the symptoms - there is always something you can do, which may even alleviate the problem or, at least, will make you feel better about it. I'll give a few examples.

The passing of blue motions is regarded as undesirable, but these may generally be treated with disdain. Green motions are rather uncommon - although, as Winston Churchill said, red herrings may be so numerous they run around the floor like white mice (ha, ha, ha!) - but green motions need cause no real concern at all. Now, tarry, black motions are better left alone. The passing of any motions tinged with pink should be regarded with the gravest suspicion, as it may forebode a deeper disorder in our midst. Bright red motions require an immediate veto on all activities, a complete embargo on all food supplies, and, generally, some sort of confinement is also recommended. Their passing indicates a definite weakness in the constitution.

Some other points to watch out for are . . . noises from the chair, which often precede the passing of motions. The chair should never leave it too late to open for general business and, in many cases, the chair would be remiss in not asking for a show of hands once a motion has been definitely put.

It is unwise to move that the motion be put if you're not sure whether it will make its mark or not. And then you will find that points of order made from the floor very often go unheeded.

It is also unwise to dispense with standing orders, because this may unduly facilitate the passing of motions, which could get out of hand. Bear in mind, however, that closed sittings may contravene basic human rights.

Finally, let us not dwell on the difficulties too long. As I said, running a meeting – or changing a nappy - is really nothing to worry about. You can judge its success quite simply. There should be a reasonable amount of wriggling and kicking, not too much falling asleep - not while the business is being done, anyway - a few gurgles and grunts and snorts, perhaps even a scream - hopefully, not for very long - quite a few laughs, and, as I said, the straightforward passing of nicely-formed motions.

Thankyou for your attention.

Lloyd Fell c. 1965
