
Constitution of the Communist Party of America.

Adopted by the Founding Convention, Chicago, Sept. 1-7, 1919.

Published in *Manifesto and Program. Constitution. Report to the Communist International.*
(Chicago, IL: Communist Party of America, n.d. [1919]), pp. 18-25.

I. Name and Purpose.

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be THE COMMUNIST PARTY of America. Its purpose shall be the education and organization of the working class for the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the abolition of the capitalist system, and the establishment of the Communist Society.

III. Membership.

Section 1. Every person who accepts the principles and tactics of the Communist Party and the Communist International and agrees to engage actively in the work of the party shall be eligible to membership. It is the aim of this organization to have in its ranks only those who participate actively in its work.

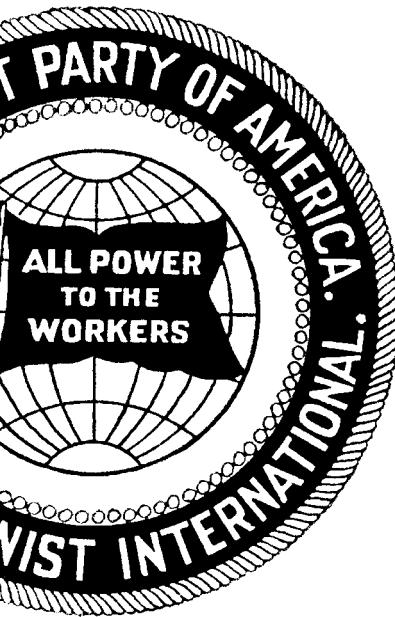
Section 2. Applicants for membership shall sign an application card reading as follows:

“The undersigned, after having read the constitution and program of the Communist Party, declares his adherence to the principles and tactics of the party and the Communist International; agrees to submit to the discipline of the party as stated in its constitution and pledges himself to engage actively in its work.”

Section 3. Every member must join a duly constituted branch of the party. There shall be no members-at-large.

Section 4. All application cards must be endorsed by two persons who have been members for not less than three months.

Section 5. Applications for membership shall not be finally acted upon until two months after presentation to the branch, and in the meantime applicant shall pay initiation fee and dues and shall attend meetings and classes. He shall have a voice and no vote. Provided that this rule shall not apply to the charter members of new branches nor to the members who make application to newly organized branches during the first month.



II. Emblem.

Section 1. The emblem of the party shall be a button with the figure of the earth in the center in white with gold lines and a red flag across the face bearing the inscription, “All Power to the Workers”; around the figure of the earth a red margin shall appear with the words “The Communist Party of America” and “The Communist International” on this margin in white letters.

Section 6. No person who is a member or supporter of any other political organization shall be admitted to membership.

Section 7. No person who has an entire livelihood from rent, interest, or profit shall be eligible to membership in the Communist Party.

Section 8. No person shall be accepted as a member who enters into the service of the national, state, or local governmental bodies otherwise than through the Civil Service or by legal compulsion.

Section 9. No members of the Communist Party shall contribute articles or editorials of a political or economic character to publications other than those of the Communist Party or of parties affiliated with the Communist International. (This clause shall not be considered as prohibiting the contribution of articles written from an economic or scientific standpoint to scientific or professional journals. Permission to answer an attack upon the Communist Party in the bourgeois press may be granted by the Central Executive Committee).

IV. Units of Organization.

Section 1. The basic organization of the Communist Party shall be branches of no less than seven members. (Applicants for a charter shall fill out the form provided by the National Organization).

Section 2. Two or more branches located in the same city shall form a City Central Committee. City Central Committees may include branches in adjacent territory, subject to supervision of the central management of the party.

Section 3. City Central Committees and all other branches in the same state shall form State Organizations. Provided, that under the control of the Central Executive Committee more than one state may be included in a single District Organization; and provided also that District Organizations may be formed by the Central Executive Committee along the lines of industrial rather than state divisions.

Section 4. Branches of the Communist Party made up of members who speak a foreign language, when there are ten or more of such branches, constituting of a total not less than 750 members, may form a Language Federation. Provided, that this rule shall not apply as to members of those Federations affiliating with the party at the time of its organization or within four months thereafter. No more than one Federation of the same language may exist in the party.

Section 5. All language branches shall join and become part of the Federations of their language, if such a Federation exists.

Section 6. All subsidiary units shall be combined in the Communist Party. Branches of the cities, states, districts, and federations shall be units of the Communist Party.

V. Administration.

Section 1. The supreme administrative body of the Communist Party shall be the convention of the party.

Section 2. Between the meetings of the conventions the supreme body shall be the Central Executive Committee elected by the convention. The Central Executive Committee shall consist of fifteen members. The convention shall also elect five alternates who shall take their places as members of the Central Executive Committee in case of vacancies in the order of their vote.

Section 3. The Central Executive Committee shall elect from its members a sub-committee of five members, who together with the Executive Secretary and the Editor of the central organ of the party shall be known as the Executive Council. The members of the Executive Council shall live in the city where the National Headquarters are located or in adjacent cities. This Executive Council shall carry on the work of the party under the supervision of the Central Executive Committee.

Section 4. The Convention shall elect an Executive Secretary and the Editor of the central organ of the party. All other officials shall be appointed by the Central Executive Committee.

Section 5. The Executive Secretary and Editor shall conduct their work under the direction of the Central Executive Committee.

Section 6. The supreme administrative power of the State, District, Federation, or City units shall be vested in the conventions of those respective units. Conventions of the State or District Organization shall be held in May or June each year.

Section 7. Between conventions of the District, State, and Federations the Central Executive Committee of these organizations shall be the supreme bodies.

Section 8. The Central Executive Committee of these organizations shall in each case be elected by the conventions, which shall also determine the number of members.

Section 9. The City Central Committee shall consist of delegates elected by the branches upon the basis of proportional representation. They shall meet at least once each month. The City Central Committees shall elect their Executive Committees and Executive Officers.

Section 10. Each Federation shall elect a Translator-Secretary, who shall have an office in the National Headquarters and whose salary shall be paid by the National Organization. Translator-Secretaries are the representatives of their organizations in the National Headquarters, and shall serve as mediums of communication. They shall submit monthly to the Executive Secretary and the State and District Organizations a statement showing all the dues stamps sold during the previous month. Translator-Secretaries shall not be eligible to membership in the Central Executive Committee but shall meet with the Committee and the Executive Council and have a voice but no vote.

VI. Dues.

Section 1. Each applicant for membership shall pay an initiation fee of fifty cents, which shall be receipted for by an initiation stamp furnished by the National Organization. The fifty cents shall be divided between

the branch and City Central Committee. Where there is no City Central Committee its share shall be paid to the State or District Organization.

Section 2. Each member shall pay forty cents per month in dues. Stamps shall be sold to the State or District Organization at fifteen cents; State or District Organizations shall sell stamps to the City Central Committees and branches in cases where there are no City Committees at twenty-five cents; City Central Committees shall sell stamps to branches at thirty cents.

Section 4. Special assessment may be levied by the National Organization, Federations, or the Central Executive Committee. No member shall be considered in good standing unless he purchases such special assessment stamps.

Section 5. Husband and wife belonging to the same branch may purchase dual stamps, which shall be sold at the same price as the regular stamps. Special assessments must be paid by both husband and wife.

Section 6. Members unable to pay dues on account of unemployment, strikes, sickness or for similar reasons shall, upon application to their financial secretary, be furnished exempt stamps. Provided that no State or District Organization or Federation shall be allowed exempt stamps in a proportion greater than 5 percent of its monthly purchase of regular stamps.

Section 7. Members who are three months in arrears in payment of their dues shall cease to be members of the party in good standing. Members who are six months in arrears shall be stricken from the rolls. No member shall pay dues in advance for a period of more than three months.

VII. Discipline.

Section 1. All decisions of the governing bodies of the party shall be binding upon the membership and subordinate units of the organization.

Section 2. Any member or organization violating the decisions of the party shall be subject to expulsion by the organization which has jurisdiction. Charges

against members shall be made before branches, subject to appeal by either side to the City Central Committee, or State or District Organization where there is no City Central Committee. Charges against the branches shall be made before the City Central Committee, or where there is no City Central Committee, before the State or District Organization. Charges against State or District Organizations shall be made before the Central Executive Committee. When a City Central Committee expels a Federation branch, the branch shall have the right to present its case to the Central Executive Committee of the Federation. If the Central Executive Committee of the Federation decides to that effect it may bring an appeal for reinstatement before the Central Executive Committee of the party, which shall make final disposition of the matter.

Section 3. Members and branches of the Federation shall be subject to the discipline of the Federation. Branches expelled by the Federation shall have the right to appeal to the City Central Committee, or, when there is no City Central Committee, to the State or District Organization. If the City Central Committee or the State or District Organization does not uphold the expulsion the matter shall be referred to the Central Executive Committee upon documentary evidence, and if the decision of the City Central Committee or State or District Organization is upheld, the branch shall be reinstated as a branch of the Federation.

Section 4. Each unit of the party organization shall restrict its activities to the territory it represents.

Section 5. A member who desires to transfer his membership to another branch shall secure a transfer card from the financial secretary of his branch. No branch shall receive a member from another branch without such a transferral card, and upon presentation of the transfer card the secretary of the branch receiving the same shall make inquiry about the standing of the member to the secretary issuing the card.

Section 6. All party units shall use uniform application cards, dues books, and accounting records, which shall be printed by the National Organization.

Section 7. All employees of the party must be party members.

VIII. Headquarters.

Section 1. The National Headquarters of the party shall be located in Chicago. In an emergency District or State Office may be used as the National Headquarters.

IX. Qualifications.

Section 1. Members of the Central Executive Committee, the Executive Secretary, Editor, International Delegates and International Secretary, and all candidates for political office must have been members of the party for two years at the time of their election or nomination. Those shall be eligible to election to party offices or nomination to public office on June 1, 1920, who join the Communist Party before Jan. 1, 1920. All who state their intention of joining the Communist Party shall be eligible at this convention.

X. Conventions.

Section 1. National Conventions shall be held annually during the month of June, the specific date and place to be determined by the Central Executive Committee. The Central Executive Committee may call Emergency Conventions, and such conventions may also be called by referendum vote.

Section 2. Representatives at the National Convention shall be upon the basis of one delegate for each 500 members or major fraction thereof; provided, that when the number of delegates would exceed a total of 200 the Central Executive Committee shall increase the basis of representation so that the number of delegates shall not exceed that figure.

Section 3. Delegates shall be apportioned to the State or District Organizations on the basis of one delegate for each such organization, and the apportionment of the balance on the basis of the average membership for the six months prior to the issue of the call for the convention. Delegates shall be elected at the Convention of the State or District Organization.

Section 4. Delegates to the National Convention shall be paid their traveling expenses and a per diem of \$5.00.

Section 5. The call for the convention and the apportionment of delegates shall be published not later than April 1.

XI. Referendum and Recall.

Section 1. Referendums on the question of party platform policy or constitution shall be held upon the petition of 25 or more branches representing 5 percent of the membership; (2) or by initiative of the Central Executive Committee; (3) or by initiative of the National Convention.

Section 2. All officers of the National Organization or those elected to public office shall be subject to recall upon initiative petition of 25 or more branches, representing 5 percent of the membership. A recall vote of the membership may also be initiated by the Central Executive Committee.

Section 3. Each motion and resolution shall be printed in the official bulletin and remain open for ninety days from the date of first publication, and, if it has then not received the requisite number of seconds, it shall be abandoned. The vote on each referendum shall close

sixty days after its submission.

Section 4. Referendums shall be submitted without preamble or comment, but the party press shall be open for discussion of the question involved during the time the referendum is pending.

XII. International Delegate and Secretary.

Section 1. Delegates to the International Congress and alternates and an International Secretary and alternate shall be elected by this convention.

Schedule.

Any branch of the Socialist Party or Socialist Labor Party which endorses the program and constitution of the Communist Party and applies for a charter before Jan. 1, 1920, shall be accepted as a branch.

The provisions of Art. III, Section 4, shall not be enforced until after Dec. 1, 1919, except as to the two signatures.

RECOMMENDATION.

That this Convention authorize the secretary immediately to issue a Special Organization Stamp to sell at fifty cents to create a fund for the organization of the party.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.