
Constitution of the Young Communist League of America: Adopted by the First National Convention, early May 1922. †

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 152, ll. 1-4.

(This constitution is subject to editorial revisions. The matter of relations between the YCL and the CP of A has not yet been settled. This matter is now being taken up by your NEC with the CEC of the Communist Party. When settled the decisions will be communicated to your immediately.)

Article I. — The Organization.

Section 1. The Young Communist League of America is the American Section of the Young Communist International and carries on its activities in accordance with the decisions reached at the International Congresses and the decisions made on this basis by the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International.

Section 2. The Young Communist League of America carries on its political activity within the national sphere in accordance with the general directives of the Communist Party of America, Section of the Communist International.

Section 3. The organizational relationship of the YCL of A to the CP of A is through national representation, with decisive vote, on all committees of both organizations.

Article II. — Emblem.

Section 1. The emblem of the Young Communist League shall be the crossed hammer and sickle on

a five-pointed star, within a double circle, with the words “Young Communist League of America, Section of the Young Communist International” in a circular margin.

Article III. — Membership.

Section 1. Eligible to membership are those (with a minimum age of 15 [?] and no maximum) who accept the program, constitution, theses, resolutions, and the decisions of the YCL of A and the YCI and agree to submit to League discipline and engage actively in the work; provided applicant is not a member of any other political organization of the youth or political party other than the CP of A, Section of the CI.

Section 2. Applicants shall be vouched for by 2 persons who have been regular members of the League for at least 3 consecutive months, except in newly-organized groups in new territory. Every applicant shall be accepted upon the recommendation by the recruiting group captain and by the approval of the next higher body.

Section 3. Regular members of the Communist

†- According to Theodore Draper in *The Roots of American Communism*, the founding convention of the Young Communist League was held Thursday, April 20, 1922 in Bethel, Connecticut. (pg. 344) This date differs from what is stated in the archival document here, however, it reading “Adopted by the first National Convention, May, 1922.” The archival constitution here is attached to an extensive set of resolutions, seeming to indicate a convention of more than a single day’s duration. The founding convention of the parallel “legal” organization, the Young Workers League of America, is known to have been held in New York City from Saturday, May 13 through Monday, May 15, 1922 — some days after the termination of the YCL convention. If Draper is incorrect with his April 20 date, as now seems probable, it is most likely that the YCL founding convention was held for some number of days terminating on Friday, May 12, 1922. The YCL was an “underground” organization, however, and this historical detail was carefully concealed by the participants for security reasons.

Party of America, Section of the Communist International, are eligible to membership without a probationary status. Such members may also recommend applicants for membership in the YCL, provided their time of membership in the CP of A and/or the YCL of A has been for a period of at least 3 consecutive months.

Section 4. A special captain, appointed by no lower unit than the Sub-District Committee, shall be placed in charge of each recruiting group.

Section 5 [a]. An applicant shall pay the initiation fee and dues and assessments beginning with the month in which he is accepted into the recruiting group.

[b]. Applicants unemployed may be exempted from the paying of initiation, dues, and assessments if so recommended by the 2 members proposing the applicant and if approved by the Sub-District Committee.

Section 6. A member may transfer from one League unit to another only upon certification of the League unit to which he belongs and approval by the next higher body. The unit certifying to the transfer must ascertain that the member requesting transfer has discharged all League obligations and shall notify the unit to which the member transfers, through regular League channels.

Article IV. — Forms and Units of Organization.

Section 1. The YCL of A is a highly centralized organization with the convention as its supreme body and the NEC acting as such between conventions.

Section 2. The general divisions of the YCL shall be along the lines of the CP organization.

Section 3. The basic unit of the YCL shall be the group of approximately 10 members and whenever possible of not less than 5 members.

Section 4 (a). That wherever there are 5 groups in a locality forming a Section of the CP, the group organizers of the YCL groups shall constitute, together with the section organizer elected by the group captains, the Section Committee of the YCL.

(b). The Section Organizer shall be the YCL representative on the Section Committee of the CP and vice versa.

Section 5. That wherever there are 5 groups in a

locality constituting a Sub-District of the CP, the group captains, together with the Sub-District Organizer, shall constitute the Sub-District Committee of the CP and vice versa.

Section 6 (a). That wherever there are more than 5 groups within a locality constituting a Sub-District Committee of the CP, these groups shall be divided into Sections.

(b). If a Sub-District consists of only 2 Sections, the Sub-District Committee of the YCL shall consist of the Section Organizers, the Sub-District Organizer, and 2 other members, 1 from each Section, elected by their respective Section Committees, making a total of 5 members. If there are 3 Sections, the Committee shall consist of the Section organizers and the Sub-District Organizer and 1 other member elected by them. If there are 4 or more Sections, the Sub-District Committee shall consist of the Section Organizers and the Sub-District Organizer.

(c). The Sub-District Organizer of the YCL shall be the representative of the CP Sub-District Committee and vice versa.

Section 7 (a). Wherever there are more than 10 groups within a locality constituting a District of the CP, these groups shall be divided into Sub-Districts in accordance with previously stated divisions.

(b). The Sub-District Organizers of the YCL, together with the District Organizer, shall constitute themselves into the District Committee of the YCL. If the Committee so constituted is less than 5, the Sub-District Organizers together with the District Organizer shall elect additional members, so that the total membership of the District Committee of the YCL numbers 5. If the number of Sub-District Organizers and the District Organizer numbers 5 or more, no other members shall be added.

(c). The District Organizer of the YCL shall be the representative on the District Committee of the CP and vice versa.

Section 8. Members speaking a common language other than English may organize into a group speaking that particular language. The formation of such language speaking groups shall be done only in case of necessity and is subject to the approval of the District Committee or the Sub-District Committee.

Article V. — Conventions.

Section 1. The Convention is the supreme body of the League and shall be called by the National Executive Committee at least once a year.

Section 2. Emergency conventions, with all the powers of regular conventions, may be called by the NEC upon its own initiative or upon demand of District or Sub-District Conventions representing 40% of the membership.

Section 3 (a). Elections to the National Convention and the number of delegates shall be upon a basis of proportional representation; the apportionment of delegates shall be determined by the NEC.

(b). Elections to District or Sub-District Conventions and the number of delegates shall be upon a basis of proportional representation, determined by the District or Sub-District Committee.

Section 4. District Organizers and Sub-District Organizers may attend the conventions of their respective and subordinate units and shall have a voice but no vote, unless elected as delegates themselves.

Section 5 (a). Electors to Sub-District conventions shall be from their respective units.

(b). Any member within a District may be elected to a District Convention.

(c). Any member of the organization may be elected as a delegate to the National Convention. In case there is no District Organization in any territory, any member of the organization may be elected by the Sub-District Convention as delegate to the National Convention.

Section 6 (a). At the same time that the call for the National Convention is issued, the NEC shall submit to every group for discussion the agenda and other propositions that are to come before the Convention.

(b). The agenda for the National Convention is to be issued at least 60 days before the Convention.

(c). The League press shall be open for discussion of important matters at least 60 days before the Convention.

(d). Sixty days prior to the National Convention, District or Sub-District Organizers shall call representative meetings at least once every 2 weeks for the purpose of discussing the agenda and other Convention matters.

(e). Delegates to the National Convention shall

be paid railroad expenses only.

(f). The NEC is empowered to tax membership to cover all convention expenses. Every District or Sub-District Committee shall raise its quota on the basis of the membership within its jurisdiction.

Article VI. — National Executive Committee.

Section 1. Between conventions the NEC shall be the supreme body of the League and shall direct and supervise all League activities.

Section 2. The NEC shall consist of 5 members elected by the National Convention. The National Convention shall elect 3 alternates. When the list of alternates has been exhausted, the NEC shall have the right of co-optation.

Section 3. Candidates for the NEC shall have been members of the YCL for at least 6 months and at least 1 year of the Communist Party of America.

Section 4. The identity of the NEC shall not be made known either by themselves or by those present at the Convention.

Section 5. The NEC shall elect delegates to the International Congresses or Conferences of the YCI, the member of the YCI Bureau, representatives and alternates to the EC of the YCI, the YCL representative on the EC of the CP of A, and the officers of the NEC of the League.

Section 6. The NEC shall make a monthly report of the League activities and League finances, itemized by Districts or Sub-Districts.

Section 7. A complete auditing and accounting of all League funds shall be made every 6 months. No paid official or paid employee shall be a member of the Auditing Committee. Reports of the Auditing Committees shall be made to the membership within 1 month after the completion of its work.

Article VII. — Districts and Subordinate Units.

Section 1. The NEC shall appoint the District and Sub-District Organizers.

Section 2. Every District Committee, or Sub-District Committee where no District Committee exists, shall submit and carry out the instructions of the NEC to the membership within its respective terri-

tory. The above Committees shall make remittances, financial statements, and reports to the NEC at least once every 2 weeks. They shall submit financial statements to the membership in their respective territories at least once every month.

Section 3. District Conventions shall be held at least once every 6 months. Delegates to the District Conventions shall be apportioned on a basis of proportional representation determined by the District Committees. Where no District organization exists, Sub-District Conventions shall be held upon the same basis of representative delegations.

Section 4. District Committees shall meet at least once a month. The District Organizer shall make a complete report to the District Committee on all activities and finances, and carry out all decisions of the District Committee.

Section 5. The Sub-District Committee shall meet at least once every 2 weeks. The Sub-District Organizer shall make a complete report to the Sub-District Committee on all activities and finances, and carry out all decisions of the Sub-District Committee.

Section 6. The Section Committee shall meet at least once every 2 weeks. The Section Organizer shall make a complete report to the Section Committee on all activities and finances, and carry out all decisions of the Section Committee.

Section 7. The Groups shall meet at least once every 2 weeks. They shall elect a Group Captain who shall make a complete report on all League activities.

Section 8. Reports on all activities of the CP of A shall be submitted to all League members through their representatives on the committees of the CP.

Section 9. The committees of the various League units are authorized to act within their jurisdiction, subject to the decisions of the next higher unit.

Article VIII. — Discipline.

Section 1. All members and League units shall maintain and enforce discipline. All decisions of the governing bodies of the League shall be binding upon the membership and subordinate units.

Section 2. The following offenses are breaches of League discipline:

a). Violation of the fundamental principles of the program, constitution, theses, resolutions, and de-

isions of the League.

b). Willfully to block and disrupt League work.

c). Knowingly and unnecessarily to endanger the underground work of the League.

d). In any way to betray the League trust.

Section 3. Written charges must be presented against any member or unit accused of a breach of discipline and these must be investigated by the next higher unit before discipline is enforced.

Section 4. Members deliberately accusing any member or unit of the League, after accusation has been found groundless by the investigating committee, are subject to discipline.

Section 5. Members may be expelled or suspended by the Sub-District Committee or District Committee within their respective jurisdiction, subject to the approval of the next higher body.

Section 6. Investigation of individual League members may be initiated by the NEC and members may be suspended or expelled by the NEC.

Section 7. Groups may be suspended, expelled, or reorganized by the Sub-District Committee, subject to the approval by the District Committee.

Section 8. Sections may be suspended, expelled, or reorganized by the District Committee (or Sub-District committee where no District organization exists), subject to the approval of the NEC.

Section 9. All units lower than the District Organization may be suspended, expelled, or reorganized by the NEC.

Section 10. District Committees may recommend to the NEC the suspension, expulsion, or reorganization of Sub-District organizations.

Section 11. Districts may be suspended, expelled, or reorganized by the NEC, subject to the approval of the Convention.

Section 12 (a). Members suspended or expelled may appeal to the next higher body before final action is taken. The suspension or expulsion of a member of the League by the NEC is final. (In re NEC members, see Sections 16 and 17 of Article VIII).

(b). Appeals must be made within 30 days after notification of suspension or expulsion.

Section 13. Any unit of the organization may appeal to the second higher body before final action is taken on its suspension, expulsion, or reorganization.

Section 14. Any higher unit in the League may

present charges against any subordinate unit or member within its jurisdiction. Any subordinate unit may prefer charges against any official of a higher body or against the whole higher body to the next higher body.

Section 15. Every member of the League, elected or appointed to an official in any organization, shall be under strict League control and [to the] immediate instructions of the League nucleus functioning in that organization or the committee in charge of the work in that organization.

Section 16. The NEC shall maintain discipline over its own members. It may suspend or expel one of its members by unanimous vote, the member to be suspended or expelled not voting.

Section 17. Any suspended or expelled member of the NEC shall have the right to appeal in writing to the next League Convention.

Article IX. — Finance.

Section 1. Applicants for membership shall pay an initiation fee of 50¢, which shall be forwarded to the National Office.

Section 2. Monthly dues shall be 25¢ and shall be receipted for by a dues stamp issued by the NEC and payable to the national treasury through regular League channels.

Section 3. Special assessments may be levied by the Convention and the NEC. No member shall be considered in good standing unless he pays such assessments.

Section 4 (a). Members unable to pay dues and assessments on account of sickness, unemployment, imprisonment, strikes, or for similar reasons, shall be granted exemption upon application to the next higher unity.

(b). Group organizers shall include such requests in their reports, and organizers of higher units shall report all exemptions granted to the next higher body whenever they make remittances for dues or assessments.

Section 5. Dues shall be paid monthly. No advance payments shall be made.

Section 6. Members who have not paid dues by the 1st of the month for the previous month shall be considered in bad standing. A member who is 2 months in arrears shall be dropped from the membership, unless within one month after notification by the group organizer he places himself in good standing.

Article X. — League Press.

Section 1. The NEC shall publish the official organ of the League. It shall be issued once every 3 months.

Section 2. The NEC shall issue a monthly League bulletin, which shall be distributed to the membership free of charge.

Section 3. Literature issued by the League shall be under the supervision and control of the NEC.

Section 4. No subdivision of the League may publish leaflets, papers, books, or other publications without the permission of the NEC.

Section 5. All legal and illegal press shall be unconditionally and fully subject to the supervision and control of the NEC, or such other League units as may be expressly authorized by the NEC.

Section 6. No member of the League shall contribute articles or editorials of a political or economic nature to the bourgeois press except by permission of the NEC.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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