
NEC Maps Program for Social Democratic Federation: SDF Constitution Protects States

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The Social Democratic Federation is a federation of state, local, and other affiliated bodies functioning on the basis of democracy and broad autonomy of component organizations.

In conformity with the democratic Socialism which it represents, every vestige of centralism and bureaucratic control is excluded.

Autonomy Guarded.

The official name of the organization is the Social Democratic Federation of the United States of America. The powers of the National Executive Committee are clearly defined in manner guarding the autonomous rights of the state organizations.

Any state organization, while being an affiliate of the SDF and functioning as such within the national organization, may, in accordance with the constitution, “adopt another name where necessary or desirable for political purposes.” Thus a SDF organization within a state may function as a political party if deemed possible or desirable.

The object of the Social Democratic Federation is “the promotion of the principles of Social Democracy and independent political action.”

The structure of the Social Democratic Federation, as defined in the constitution, is as follows:

“The Social Democratic Federation shall consist of state organizations and local organizations in unorganized states, language federations, and individuals who adhere to the principles of democratic Socialism, and such organizations as desire to affiliate upon a fraternal basis as may be decided by the National Executive Committee.

“In organized states, individuals and locals shall be under the jurisdiction of the state organizations.

“Organized states shall be such as have at least 100 members organized in less than three locals, or 75 members organized in three or more locals.

“Locals in unorganized states may affiliate with the national organization.

“Individuals in unorganized states may become members-at-large of the Social Democratic Federation except in localities where an affiliated local exists.

“In organized states, the state committee shall have control of the organization activities, and the National Executive Committee shall not interfere in any manner, nor shall any member of the SDF not a resident of the state interfere in the affairs of the state organization.

“Any person 21 years of age or over who accepts the constitution, bylaws, and Declaration of Principles of the Social Democratic Federation and is otherwise acceptable to the organization, is eligible to membership in the SDF.”

Function of NEC.

The National Executive Committee is to administer the affairs of the SDF in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. It consists of 9 members, no more than 2 of which can come from any one state, and may fill interim vacancies. The committee, elected by national conventions of the SDF, must meet at least once every 3 months, a majority constituting an quorum.

Other provisions governing the functions of this committee under the constitution are:

“The minutes of the National Executive Committee shall be sent to all members of the NEC within 5 days after the meeting and shall be sent to all State Secretaries within 10 days.

“The National Executive Committee shall elect the National Executive Secretary to serve at its pleasure, but not to exceed a term of one year, and shall fix his salary and the number of employees and their salaries. The Executive Secretary and such employees shall be subject to removal by the NEC.

“The National Executive Committee shall prepare and print leaflets and pamphlets and supply same to the state and local organizations and to individual members.

“It may tour organizers, lecturers, and speakers. In touring speakers and lecturers, the NEC shall consult the state organization in organized states, and local organizations, if any, in unorganized states. It shall appoint such committees as it may find necessary.

“The NEC shall prepare the order of business and rules for national conventions and publish same in the press at least 30 days before the convention.

“The NEC shall have the right to adopt rules for its procedure, not inconsistent with the provisions of this constitution.

“It shall also have the power to take such steps as it may find desirable for the promotion of the general welfare of the members of the SDF.”

Detailed provisions governing the payment of dues by state and local organizations and language federations are included in the constitution. The right to print and sell dues stamps is vested solely in the NEC.

Provision is made for members-at-large in unorganized states, such members paying dues directly to the national organization.

A Yearly Convention.

The constitution provides that a national convention of the SDF shall be held annually at such time and place as fixed by the National Executive Committee. Delegates at the Pittsburgh convention suggested that the next convention be held in Milwaukee, although others favored New York City.

Detailed provisions for representation at national conventions are incorporated in the constitution.

The constitution provides that “for the purpose of political action (the nomination of candidates for public office and political campaigns), state and local organizations may nominate candidates of their own, or may cooperate with existing labor parties in their states or cities.”

It is also provided that “a labor party with which the state or local affiliated with the SDF may cooperate must be a political organization independent of the Republican and Democratic parties and of political organizations advocating force, violence, or dictatorship, and must be supported chiefly by organized workers and farmers.”

The constitution states also that “it shall be the duty of the organizations of the SDF affiliated with or cooperating with labor par-

ties to advocate the nomination and election of candidates for public office independent of any of the existing political parties.”

It is provided, however, that where labor parties now existing nominate a candidate who is also a candidate of another political party, the state organization of the SDF may cooperate if the labor parties in question will carry on their own campaigns independently of any other political party.

Provision is made for forming organizations of young people in cities or counties where affiliates of the SDF exist. It is stipulated that “in no case shall the age of the members of the youth organization exceed 21 years of age,” and that “the youth organizations should at all times be under the control and supervision of the state and county organizations” in the respective states and locals.

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