
Constitution of the Socialistic Labor Party:

Adopted at the 5th National Convention of the SLP,
Cincinnati, Ohio, October 5-8, 1885.

As published in the pamphlet *Platform und Constitution der Soz. Arbeiter-Partei angenommen auf der 5ten National-Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, am 5., 6., 7. und 8. October 1885*. Socialistic Library no. 1, January 1, 1886. (New York: National Executive Committee of the Socialistic Labor Party, 1886).

CONSTITUTION of the Socialistic Labor Party.

I. Management.

The affairs of the Party are conducted by the National Executive Committee, the National Board of Supervision, the local Sections, the National Conventions, and by the general vote.

II. Conventions.

The National Convention.

1. National Conventions of the Party shall take place according to the needs of the times. The National Executive Committee is obliged to have a general vote taken every year before April 15th, in order to ascertain whether and where a National Convention is to take place; a general vote shall also be taken if three Sections in three different States shall demand it. Ten Sections in five different States may call a National Convention. Every Section belonging to the Party for three months prior to the National Convention, and which has fulfilled all its obligations, is entitled a representation therein by one delegate for each 100 members or fraction thereof. Each delegate shall have only one vote. Proxy delegates must receive their credentials from the Sections they represent.

2. The National Convention frames the National Platform, decides the form of organization, elects the place where the next National Executive Committee and Board of Supervision will be located, and investi-

gates and decides all difficulties within the Party.

The expense of the delegates will be borne by the Sections sending them. The business expense of the National Convention will be paid by the Party.

III. National Executive Committee.

1. The National Executive Committee consists of nine members, to be elected by the Section of the place where the Committee is located. From among its members the Committee elects a Corresponding Secretary for home and one for foreign affairs, also a Financial Secretary, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and two Auditors.

2. Vacancies in the Executive Committee will be held with members elected by the Section as above stated. The National Executive Committee shall declare vacant the seat of any of its members for absence from three consecutive meetings without sufficient excuse, and is authorized to order the Section of its locality to fill the vacancy.

3. The term of office of the National Executive Committee extends from one Convention to the next Convention.

4. The National Executive has for its duty:

- a. To carry out the resolutions of the National Convention and those adopted by general vote, and force their observance by all officers and members of the Party.
- b. To make proper arrangements whereby the Sections of the various districts may act unitedly for systematic propaganda.
- c. To conduct and manage the agitation

throughout the country.

- d. To represent the Party internally and publicly.
 - e. To establish proper relations and communications with the Socialistic Parties of other countries.
 - f. To make all necessary preparations for the National Convention, and make a full report to the same on all Party matters.
 - g. To issue semi-annually a report to the Party, stating definitely the condition of every Section and of the Party's finances. This report shall be revised by a Committee of three, elected by the local Section.
5. The National Executive Committee has the right:
- a. In cases of urgent necessity to make suitable propositions which shall become binding if endorsed by a general vote of the Party within two months after issue of the call.
 - b. To representation in the National Convention by one of its members, who shall have no vote, but a mere advisory voice in the proceedings, and shall bear no other credentials.
 - c. The National Executive Committee decides its own order of business.
 - d. The Executive Committee may compensate its officers, according to the labors performed by them, from the treasury of the Party.

IV. Board of Supervision.

1. The Board of Supervision shall be composed of nine members.
2. The duties of this Board shall be:
 - a. To watch over the actions of the National Executive Committee.
 - b. To settle all difficulties in the Party, involving questions of principle, within four weeks after receiving the necessary evidence, the decisions to be at once communicated to the National Executive Committee; and to decide in cases of expulsion on appeal.
 - c. The Board of Supervision can, when necessary, suspend any Boards, Executive Committees, Party officers, or members. From all decisions of the Board of Supervision appeal may be taken to a general vote. The Board must submit to the members any appeal two

weeks after appeal was placed into its hands, and the Sections must report the result of their vote to the Board of Supervision within four weeks; within two additional weeks the Board of Supervision must publish the result.

- d. The Board of Supervision may send one of its members as a delegate to the National Convention, under the same conditions as the delegate of the National Executive Committee. (See III, 5, b.)
- e. The Secretary of the Board of Supervision shall render a full report of the transactions of that Board during its term to the National Convention.
- f. The Board shall declare vacant any seat of any of its members for absence from three consecutive meetings without sufficient excuse, and is authorized to order the Section of its locality to fill the vacancy by election.

V. Sections.

1. a. A number of persons may form a Section, providing they acknowledge the Platform and Constitution and resolutions of the Party and belong to no other political party.
 - b. They shall demand admission to the Party by sending a list of members and dues for the current month to the National Executive Committee.
 - c. Each Section shall send each month a report of its numerical and financial condition, also its progress and prospects, to the National Executive Committee.
2. Only one Section of one nationality shall be established in each city or town. Branches shall be formed by the Section whenever necessary. Those branches shall be designated numerically in the order of their organization in the town or city. These branches shall be permitted to transact business of a local character, but all matters of a general nature shall be settled by the Central Committee, in which all branches shall be proportionally represented.
 3. Sections shall have jurisdiction over their own members.
 4. All Ward and District organizations, including all branches in suburbs, shall belong to the Section.

5. No Branch or District organization shall conduct business of an important local character independently of the Section.

6. Should a protest be entered against the admission to a Ward or District organization, or to a Section, of any person making application, a two-thirds vote of all present in the regular business meeting will be necessary to admit him.

7. A majority of two-thirds of votes in the business meeting shall be sufficient to expel any member.

8. Each Section or Branch shall hold an agitation meeting at least once every two weeks, and a regular business meeting at least once a month.

9. Three-fourths of the members of a Section must be wage-workers. This restriction shall not, however, apply to agriculturalists (farmers).

10. The names of all persons applying for admission to the Party must be voted upon in a regular business meeting of the Section or Branch.

VI. Central Committee.

1. In every city where two or more Branches exist, all local business of the Section and dealings with the Party authorities will be carried on by a Central Committee.

2. The Central Committee will be composed of delegates elected by the Branches, the basis of representation determined by the Branches collectively.

3. The Central Committee shall have the power to assess the local membership in a sum not exceeding two and one-half cents per member per month for funds necessary for local purposes. This assessment to be deducted from the regular dues.

4. The Treasurer of each Branch will report monthly to the Central Committee in writing concerning the financial standing of his Branch, and will pay to the Financial Secretary of the Section the dues of each member: five (5) cents to the National Executive Committee, and also all dues and assessments belonging to the local Central Committee. All other money of the Branch shall be held by its Treasurer, subject to the order of the Branch, which will be self-supporting and conduct its own affairs, subject to the general regulations of the Sections.

5. Every delegate to the Central Committee will be subject to recall at any time by the Branch which

he represents.

6. All transactions of the Central Committee shall be subject to the approval of the Branches, and will be promptly reported to them. If not objected to, they will be considered approved; but upon call of any Branch, a general vote of all Branches shall be taken for the purpose of ratifying or rejecting any disputed action of the Central Committee.

7. The Section officers shall report to and receive their instructions from the Central Committee, which represents the Section. They shall attend all meetings of the Central Committee and perform the duties specified in the Constitution. They are full members of the Central Committee.

8. The Central Committee has full power to fill vacancies in Section offices during the regular term, until a new election of officers takes place.

9. The Central Committee shall elect from its midst an Investigating Committee of three, who shall investigate and decide upon all difficulties within the Section, subject to the approval of the Central Committee and Section.

10. The Central Committee will meet as often as necessary, and the sessions shall be open to all party members who may desire to witness the proceedings.

11. Upon dissolution of any Branch, all of its property shall be delivered to the Section officers.

12. The Section shall assemble semi-annually, in January and July, for the purpose of electing the officers. In extraordinary cases the Branches may be called upon to assemble in joint meeting as the Section.

13. The Organizer shall have the right to appeal to the whole Section in case of conflict with the Central Committee, but must execute their orders until countermanded by a general vote of the Section.

VII. Dues.

1. The Sections levy upon each of their members a monthly tax of five cents, to be paid monthly to the National Executive Committee. For local purposes the Sections may levy an additional tax according to their needs.

2. The dues shall be receipted for by stamps, which shall be furnished by the National Executive Committee to the Sections, and shall be given only as receipts for monthly dues by the Sections to their mem-

bers.

3. Every members shall be provided with a copy of the Constitution free of charge.



SECTION REGULATIONS

[*Sektions-Gesetze.*]

1. Every Section elects from among its members an Organizer and such additional officers as it deems proper. The Organizer shall conduct the correspondence with the Executive, and he shall send an official report once every month to the National Executive Committee; he shall send five cents of the monthly dues of each member to the Executive; he conducts the local organization.

2. All Section officers will be elected for the term of six months.

3. At every meeting a new Chairman shall be elected who shall observe the usual parliamentary rules of order.

4. Members who have withheld payment of their dues for more than three months shall be suspended from all rights until restored to good standing.

5. Sick or unemployed members will be excused from payment of dues.

6. The result of every election within the Section must be communicated at once to the National Executive Committee.

7. Upon dissolution of any Section, all its property shall be turned over to the National Executive Committee.



DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

1. All Sections located within suitable neighborhood shall form a District organization.

2. It shall be the duty of the District organization to carry on the work of agitation and organization within its province in a systematic matter (through a committee appointed for this purpose), and to endeavor to form new Sections at such places where no Sections of the Party exists.

3. Each District organization shall hold a confer-

ence at least once every six months. Each District organization shall regularly report to the Executive Committee about the progress of its work and prospects.



GENERAL REGULATIONS

[*Allgemeine Regeln.*]

1. *Amendments to or alterations of this Constitution* can be made by the National Conventions or by a general Party vote. A general Party vote may be called for either by the National Executive Committee, National Board of Supervision, or three Sections; and any proposition in the interest of the Party made by either of the aforesaid shall be laid before the Party for a general vote by the National Executive Committee. During the first four weeks after the call for a general vote, each or either of the aforesaid parties, boards, or constituencies has the right to propose amendments to any propositions made in the proper way aforesaid. Such amendment or amendments to be accompanied with the proposition to be voted upon by the Party. The result to be communicated to the National Executive Committee within eight weeks from the original call for vote.

2. No person shall be eligible as a candidate of this Party for any public office who has not been at least one year a member of the Party in good standing, and has identified himself with the movement by active participation. This rule may be suspended in case of necessity by the Board of Supervision and National Executive Committee on application by any section.

3. All committees and officers in the Party shall be elected by a majority vote.

4. All officers, boards, or committees in the Party shall be subject to dismissal by a general vote of their constituents. Any member expelled shall have the right to appeal to the Board of Supervision.

5. All members shall be eligible to any office or position in the Party.

6. All members acknowledging the Platform and Constitution take upon themselves the obligation to assist each other to the extent of their ability in case of need.

7. The National Executive Committee is directed (in order to bring about a uniform system of transact-

ing business) to have proper financial books made to be furnished to the Sections at cost price.

8. The National Executive Committee shall immediately after the expulsion of any member publish the name of the expelled in the Party organ, and in its semi-annual reports give a list of the names so published.

9. All former provisions conflicting with these resolutions [*Statuten*] are rescinded.

10. This Constitution and all resolutions [*Statuten*] herewith adopted shall take effect on January 1, 1886.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Numbering and general document form brought into conformity with the German version.

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