
Constitution of the Communist Labor Party of America

[adopted Sept. 5, 1919]

Published in *Constitution — Platform — Program, Communist Labor Party of America*,
(Cleveland, OH: Communist Labor Party, n.d. [c. Sept. 1919]).
Copy in Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 15-16.

Article I. — Name.

The name of this organization shall be the Communist Labor Party of the United States of America.

Article II. — Membership.

Section 1. Any person, 18 years of age or over, who has severed his connection with all other political parties and political organizations and who subscribes to the principles of the Communist Labor Party, shall be eligible to membership in the party.

Section 2. No member of the party shall accept or hold any appointive public office, honorary or remunerative (Civil Service positions excepted), without the consent of his state organization; nor be a candidate for public office without the consent of his city, country, or state organization, according to the nature of the office.

Section 3. A member who desires to transfer his membership from the party in one state to the party in another state may do so upon the presentation of his card showing him to be in good standing at the time of asking for such transfer, and also a transfer card duly signed by the secretary of the local from which he transfers.

Section 4. All persons joining the communist Labor Party shall sign the following pledge:

Application for Membership in the Communist Labor Party.

I, the undersigned, recognizing the class struggle between the capitalist class and the working class, and the necessity of the working class organizing itself politically and

industrially for the establishment of Communism, do hereby apply for membership in the Communist Labor Party.

I have no relations, as member or supporter, with any other political party.

I am opposed to all political organizations that support the present capitalist profit system and am opposed to any form trading or fusing with any such organizations.

In all my political actions while a member of the Communist Labor Party, I agree to be guided by the constitution and platform of that party.

Article III. — National Executive Committee.

Section 1. The policies of the Communist Labor Party shall be carried out by the National Executive Committee.

Section 2. The National Executive Committee shall consist of 5 members who shall be elected by the annual National Conventions of the Party to serve for a term of one year. At the time when the National Executive Committee is elected, the Convention shall also elect a first and second alternate to the committee.

Section 3. Members of the National Executive Committee and alternates thereto shall be elected by majority vote of the Convention.

Section 4. The travelling expenses of members of the National Executive Committee in attending meetings of the Committee and a per diem not exceeding \$6.00 for the time of attending committee meetings shall be allowed out of the national funds.

Article IV. — Duties of the NEC.

Section 1. The duties and powers of the National Executive Committee shall be:

(a) To represent the party in all National and International affairs, subject in the latter case to the provisions for International Delegates and Secretary.

(b) To call National Conventions and special conventions decided upon by the referendum of the party. In case of emergency, the National Executive Committee may call special conventions by a four-fifths vote of the committee.

(c) To formulate the rules and the order of business of the National Conventions of the party not otherwise provided for by this constitution, and subject to amendment and adoption by the convention.

Section 2. The National Executive Committee, as required by the Federal Corrupt Practices Act, shall elect a permanent chairman who shall serve without salary.

Section 3. The Committee shall formulate its own rules of procedure, not inconsistent with the provisions of this constitution.

Section 4. Members of the National Executive Committee shall be subject to recall by the membership of the party through the referendum.

Section 5. The location of the National Headquarters shall be determined by the National Executive Committee.

Section 6. (a) No funds of the National Organization shall be appropriated by the National Executive Committee for any purpose not directly connected with the propaganda of the Communist Labor Party or the struggles of labor. No more than \$100 shall be appropriated to any one organization other than a subdivision of the party; and no application for financial assistance coming from locals or other subdivisions of state organizations shall be entertained unless they have the endorsement of their state organizations.

(b) The committee shall not have power to appropriate funds, except for the current expenses of the National Office, unless the party has sufficient funds on hand to meet all outstanding obligations, or unless the regular income will in the natural course of events cover such appropriations before the end of the current year. The committee shall make no appropriations, directly or indirectly, for the support of any paper or periodical not owned by the National Office, or by a subdivision of the party.

Section 7. The National Office mailing list of locals and branches and of subscribers shall not be given

out to anyone outside the membership, nor shall they be given to members for private purpose. Appropriate portions of them may be given to members and party officials at any time for purposes of organization, propaganda, and renewals of subscriptions.

Article V. — National Executive Secretary.

Section 1. The National Executive Secretary shall be employed by the National Executive Committee. He may be removed at any time by the committee or by referendum vote of the party membership. He shall give bonds in the amount fixed by the committee. His compensation shall be fixed by the National Executive Committee.

Section 2. The National Executive Secretary shall have charge of all affairs of the National Office, including the establishment of necessary departments, subject to the directions of the National Executive Committee. He shall supervise the accounts of the National Office and its departments.

Section 3. The National Executive Secretary shall publish a weekly official organ of the party in which shall appear all important official reports and announcements; a monthly report of the financial affairs of the party; a summary of the conditions and the membership in the states and territorial organizations; the principle business transacted by the national officials, and such other matters pertaining to the organization of the party as may be of general interest to its membership.

Section 4. The National Executive Secretary shall:

(a) Make reports of the membership and condition of the party organization and recommendations thereon, to the National Conventions.

(b) Receive dues and reports from the state organizations.

(c) Conduct the national referendums in the manner provided for in this Constitution.

(d) Print in the official organ a specific statement of all moneys expended for printing leaflets and books, with titles and authors of the same.

Article VI. — Representatives in Congress.

Section 1. Members of Congress elected on the

Communist Labor Party ticket shall submit reports of their actions in Congress to the National Conventions and to the National Executive Committee as the latter may require.

Section 2. In the support of measures proposed by the Communist Labor Party, they shall carry out instructions which may be given by the National Conventions, the National Executive Committee, or by a general referendum of the party.

Section 3. In all legislative bodies as Congress, State Legislatures, Boards of Supervisors, or Town Councils, Communist Labor Party members shall organize into a group separate and apart from all other parties. They shall elect a chairman and in the support of all measures definitely declared for in the platform of the party, they shall vote as a unit.

Article VII. — National Conventions.

Section 1. A regular National Convention of the party shall be held annually on the 10th of May at such place as the National Executive Committee may decide.

Section 2. Special conventions of the party may be held at any time if decided upon by a referendum of the membership or a four-fifths vote of the National Executive Committee.

Section 3. The National Convention shall be composed of 100 delegates to be apportioned among the states in the following manner:

One from each organized state and territory and the remainder in proportion to the average national dues paid by the organization of such states and territories during the preceding year. No delegate shall be eligible unless he is a resident member of the state from which his credential is presented.

Section 4. Railroad fare, including tourist sleeper carfare and berth, of delegates to and from the National Conventions and a per diem allowance of \$3.50 to cover expenses shall be paid from the national treasury by setting aside a portion of the national dues sufficient to cover the same, to be estimated at the beginning of each year.

Section 5. (a) The election of delegates to the National Convention shall be completed not later than 60 days preceding the convention and the State Secretaries shall furnish the National Executive Secre-

tary with a list of the accredited delegates immediately after said election.

(b) The National Executive Secretary shall prepare a printed roster of all the delegates, including the contested delegates, who shall be so indicated. This roster shall be sent to each delegate and forwarded to the party press for publication before the date of meeting. Such roster shall contain the occupation of each delegate at the time of his nomination and his office or employment in the party. All official reports required to be presented to the National Convention shall be printed and sent to each delegate elected and furnished to the party press at least 15 days before the date of the convention.

(c) At the time and place set for the opening of the National Convention, the National Executive Secretary shall call the convention to order, and shall call the roll of all delegates including the contested delegates, the uncontested delegates shall then permanently organize the convention.

(d) No delegation's seats may be contested unless the contesting delegation is present at the convention.

Section 6. The National Convention shall have the power to nominate candidates for President and Vice-President, to adopt a national platform, and to transact such business as the Convention may see fit. Vacancies on the national tickets shall be filled by the National Executive Committee.

Section 7. All national platforms, amendments of platforms, and resolutions adopted by any National Convention shall be submitted seriatim to a referendum vote of the membership. One-fourth of the regularly elected delegates shall be entitled to have alternative paragraphs to be submitted at the same time. Such alternative paragraphs, signed by one-fourth of such delegates, shall be filed with the Executive Secretary not later than one day after the adjournment of the convention.

Article VIII. — State Organizations.

Section 1. The formation of all state or territorial organizations or the organization of state or territorial organizations which may have lapsed shall be under the direction of the National Executive Secretary.

Section 2. No state or territory may be organized

unless it has an aggregate membership of not less than 300. When the membership of any state averages less than 300 per month for any 6 consecutive months the National Executive Committee may revoke the charter of that state.

Section 3. The platform of the Communist Labor Party shall be the supreme declaration of the party, and all state and municipal platforms shall conform thereto. No state or local organizations shall under any circumstances fuse, combine, or compromise with any other political party or organization, or refrain from making nominations in order to favor the candidate of such other organizations, nor shall any candidate of the Communist Labor Party accept any nomination or endorsement from any other party or political organization.

Section 4. No member of the Communist Labor Party shall, under any circumstances, vote in any political election for any candidate other than party members nominated, endorsed, or recommended as candidates by the Party, or advocate voting for them. To do so will constitute party treason and result in expulsion from the party.

Section 5. (a) The State Secretaries shall make monthly reports to the Executive Secretary concerning their membership, financial condition, and general standing in the party.

(b) During the months of January and July of each year, or at any other time required by the National Executive Committee or by this constitution, the State Secretaries shall furnish the National Executive Secretary a list of all locals affiliated with their respective state organizations, together with the number of members in good standing, and the name and address of the corresponding secretary of each local. Refusal, failure, or neglect to comply with this section shall subject the state organization to suspension from the Communist Labor Party, and shall be a forfeiture of the right to representation in the National Executive Committee, the conventions, and congresses of the party.

Section 6. (a) All applicants for membership in the Communist Labor Party upon signing the party pledge as required in Article 2, Section 4 of this constitution shall pay an initiation fee of \$1.00, 25 cents of which shall be sent to the National Office.

(b) All members shall pay uniform dues of 50 cents per month, 20 cents of which shall be sent to

the National Office.

Section 7. (a) The National Office shall also issue to the State Secretaries exempt stamps, both regular and special, free of charge, to be used by party members temporarily unable to pay dues on account of unemployment caused by sickness, strikes, lockouts, or any other condition not within their control.

(b) Any member desiring to use such exempt stamps shall make application therefor to the financial secretary of his local organization, and such application shall be passed upon by such organization. Exempt stamps shall be issued only to members in good standing who have paid dues for at least 3 months. The number of exempt stamps shall not exceed 10 percent of the total number of stamps obtained by the respective state organizations. The acceptance of exempt stamps by any member shall in no way disqualify such member from any rights and privileges of party membership.

(c) The National Office shall also issue a double perforated stamp to the State Secretaries at the rate of 20 cents per stamp, one-half of such stamp to be affixed to membership card of husband and other half to that of wife. Husbands and wives desiring to use such stamp shall make application to the financial secretary of their local and such application shall be passed upon by such organization.

Section 8. All state organizations shall provide in their constitutions for the initiative, referendum, and recall.

Section 9. No person shall be nominated or endorsed by any subdivision of the party for candidate for public office unless he is a member of the party and has been such for at least 2 years, except with the consent of the state organization. But this provision shall not apply to organizations which have been in existence for less than 2 years.

Section 10. When a controversy exists in a state organization, the Executive Secretary shall continue to sell dues stamps to the Secretary recognized by him before such controversy is officially brought before him, until a state referendum has decided otherwise. He shall take no action except on petition of 10 percent of the locals (but not less than 3 locals), which must be located in different localities, appearing on the last official list filed with him by the State Secretary at least 3 months prior to controversy, and then only if there

is no doubt as to who is State Secretary. In such case he shall hold a referendum of those locals reported on the last official list to determine who is State Secretary. The individual signed ballots in such referendum shall be sent to the Executive Secretary.

Article IX. — International Delegates and International Secretary.

Section 1. Delegates to the International Congress and International Secretary shall be elected at the time and in the manner provided for in the election of members of the National Executive Committee. There shall be 1 delegate for every 20,000 members, ascertained by computing the average for the preceding year. The requisite number of candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. The next highest in the election shall be the alternates. The expenses of the delegates and a per diem equal to the per diem fixed for members of the National Executive Committee shall be paid out of the national treasury.

International delegates and International Secretary shall be subject to recall by referendum of the party membership.

Article X. — Foreign-Speaking Federations.

Section 1. Five branches of the Communist Labor Party working in any other language than English shall have the right to form a Language Federation under the supervision of the National Executive Secretary.

Section 2. Such Language Federation shall have the right to elect an officer known as Translator-Secretary, who shall be conversant with his own language as well as the English language, and whose duty it shall be to serve as a medium of communication between his federation and the national organization of the Communist Labor Party.

Section 3. When such Language Federation shall have at least 1,000 members, their Translator-Secretary shall be entitled to necessary office room in the National Office. When any Language Federation is reduced to 1,000 members, the rights of that Language Federation to office room may be suspended at the discretion of the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. Each Foreign Language branch shall purchase its dues stamps from the City or County

Committee where such organizations exist, or otherwise from the State Secretary. Such purchases of dues stamps shall be receipted for upon a special form provided for that purpose by the National Office. These receipts shall then be sent to the respective Translator-Secretaries, who, upon presentation of the same to the National Executive Secretary, shall receive from him the sum of 15 cents for each stamp thus receipted.

Section 5. (a) Branches of Language Federations shall be integral parts of the County and State organizations, and must in all cases work in harmony with the constitution and platform of the State and County organizations of the Communist Labor Party.

Language branches not affiliated with a federation of their respective language shall work in harmony with such federation, restricting their work within the territorial jurisdiction of such branches. In no case, however, shall such branches indulge in or permit their members to carry on work against the interests of the federation. Federations shall not be permitted to organize additional branches within the territorial jurisdiction of branches not affiliated with them, except with the consent of the state organizations. The charter of any language branch not affiliated with a federation that condones or conducts work aiming at the destruction of a federation shall be revoked by the state organization in accordance with the method of procedure provided by the constitution of the state organization. When the charter of such branch is revoked, such of its members who will agree to refrain from similar objectionable work in the future shall be organized in a new branch. But no member of a branch the charter of which has been revoked for the offense mentioned above shall be denied admission to the new branch if a statement is signed obligating himself to work in harmony with the provisions of this section.

(b) A Language Federation may, if its constitution so provides, exclude for cause any of the branches or locals affiliated with it. Such excluded locals and language branches shall lose only the rights and privileges dependent upon affiliation with the federation. They shall continue to be an integral part of the County and State organizations, until such time as the exclusion has been approved by the County and State organizations.

Members of a federation cannot be suspended or expelled from the party by the federation or by

any of its subdivisions, the power to suspend or expel members from the party being vested exclusively in the County and State organizations. The accused members shall be accorded a fair trial in the manner provided by the County and State constitutions or local bylaws.

Section 6. All propaganda work of the language federations shall be carried out under the supervision of their executive officers according to the bylaws of the federations. Such bylaws must be in conformity with the constitution of the Communist Labor Party.

Section 7. Each Translator-Secretary shall make every 3 months a report of the general standing and condition of his federation to the National Office.

Section 8. The Communist Labor Party shall not recognize more than one federation of the same language.

Section 9. Each federation shall be entitled to elect one fraternal delegate to the National Conventions of the party; provided, that such delegate shall have a voice but no vote. He shall receive railroad fare and per diem from the party the same as regular delegates.

Article XI. — Referendum.

Section 1. Motions or resolutions to be voted upon by the entire membership of the party except proposed amendments to the National Constitution shall be submitted by the Executive Secretary to the referendum vote of the party membership upon the request of locals representing at least 5 percent of the entire membership on the basis of dues paid in the preceding year.

The term "local" as herein used shall be construed to mean a local or branch of a local, but not a body composed of delegates from branches or locals.

Section 2. Each motion and resolution shall be printed in the official paper and remain open 90 days from the date of first publication, and, if it has not then received the requisite number of seconds, it shall be abandoned. The vote on each referendum shall close 60 days after its submission.

Section 3. Referendums shall be submitted without preamble or comment. But comment not to exceed 200 words both for and against may accompany the motion when printed.

Section 4. Any officer who attempts to interfere

with the processes of the membership shall be expelled from office.

Section 5. Whenever a motion, resolution, or an amendment has been regularly initiated and passed upon by the party membership, another motion that conflicts with the same shall not be considered for at least 6 months.

Article XII. —

Young People's Communist League.

Section 1. The work of the Young People's Communist Labor League in the national field shall be under the control and direction of the [National] Executive Committee of the party.

Section 2. Branches of the Young People's Communist Labor League shall be under the control of the City, County, or State organizations, and must in all cases work in harmony with the constitution and platform of the City, County, or state organization of the party.

Section 3. The Young People's Communist Labor League shall be entitled to elect one fraternal delegate, having a voice but no vote, to the National Conventions. He shall receive railroad fare and per diem from the party the same as regular delegates.

Article XIII. — Amendments.

Section 1. This Constitution may be amended by a referendum of the party membership; amendments may be proposed by the National Convention, or upon the request of locals representing at least 8 percent of the entire membership on the basis of dues paid in the preceding year. All such amendments to be submitted seriatim to a referendum vote of the party membership.

The term "local" as herein used shall be construed to mean a local or branch of a local, but not a body composed of delegates from branches or locals.

Section 2. All amendments shall take effect 60 days after being approved by the membership.

Article XIV.

Section 1. Any person, formerly a member of the Socialist Party of the US who at the time of the

Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party in 1919, was in good standing in that organization and who has signed the regular application pledge for the Communist Labor Party, shall be considered a member in good standing of the Communist Labor Party and shall not be required to pay the \$1.00 initiation fee, provided such persons' application for membership in the Communist Labor Party shall be received before December 1, 1919.

Section 2. This constitution shall be in effect immediately upon its adoption by the Convention at Chicago at which the Communist Labor Party was formed.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2010. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.