
CEC Settles Defense Policy.

A document sent by the Workers Party of America
to its press, DOs, and Language Bureaus, April 1922.

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 146, ll. 63-64.

The biggest single question taken up at the special meeting of the Administrative Council of the Workers Party was that of determining the relations between the National Defense Committee and the Central Executive of the Workers Party. This committee has been taking care of cases arising out of the Espionage, Anti-Syndicalist, Red-Flag, and similar repressive laws, raising court costs, bail fees, and relief for the families of men held in prison or for deportation. The organization of the Workers Party and the undoubted need for creating a defense organ of that party brought up the question of possible unnecessary conflict with the existing committee.

A sub-committee consisting of [William F.] Kruse, [Elmer T.] Allison, and [James P.] Cannon took up the matter with National Defense Committee officials and a mutually satisfactory thesis was formulated and agreed to by the CEC. This is called to the attention of all Party locals and branches, and is to be acted upon at once. The thesis follows:—

The National Defense Committee.

1. The Functions and obligations of the National Defense Committee are taken over by the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party, which shall continue the defense work under the name of the National Defense Committee. The CEC shall appoint the director of the Defense Department, who shall be known as the Secretary of the National Defense Committee. He shall carry on his work under the supervision and direction of the CEC.

2. The funds of the National Defense Committee shall be banked separately from those of the Party,

and checks on this fund shall be signed both by the National Defense Committee Secretary and the Secretary of the Party. All income from the sale of Defense Stamps to Party members, and other Party defense activities shall be deposited in the Defense Fund Bank Account. All expenses of the Defense Committee shall be paid out of this fund.

Branches of the National Defense Committee.

3. The Local Division of the National Defense Committee shall be organized as follows:

(a) The City Central Committee shall establish a Defense Department. There shall be a sub-committee selected from the City Central Committee to be supplemented by delegates from Branches of the Workers Party, which body shall constitute the local Branch of the National Defense Committee.

(b) The Local Division shall select its officers subject to the approval of the City Central Committee. There shall be a Secretary, a Financial Secretary, and a Treasurer. The offices of Financial Secretary and Treasurer may be held by the same person if deemed advisable.

(c) The Local Division shall be in direct communication through its officers with the National Office of the NDC and shall submit monthly reports of finances and activities to the National Defense Secretary and to the City Central Committee.

4. Local Defense Divisions shall remit all defense funds raised, above necessary expenses for current local defense needs, to the National Defense Committee.

5. Defense funds shall not be mixed with Regular Party local funds.

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The defense cards and stamps mentioned in the report refer to the action taken at the December [1921 WPA founding] convention, which decided that there should be a 5¢ assessment for defense purposes levied on all members. This will be handled by a special white defense card slightly smaller than the folded membership card, and a special 5¢ defense stamp. The total proceeds from this source are to be banked separately from party funds and cannot be used for anything but defense needs.

The reason why the issuance of these stamps was postponed until July 1st was to give the organization a chance to get the regular due stamps system in effective operation first. This due stamps system, embracing as it does two different intermediate and three different kinds of local units, using five different kinds of stamps, is quite intricate and could not be complicated by any further issues. The members and local officers understand it now, however, and the whole structure is working without a hitch. By July 1st, there will no longer be the slightest misunderstanding, and the defense fund assessment will not result in any confusion. The small size of the contribution will not make it felt to any member, but in the aggregate it will be of considerable help in maintaining this most pressing work of our movement.

The Committee elected Edgar Owens to continue his work as Defense Secretary under the new arrangement as he had done under the old. Comrade Owens is experienced in this work and his efforts have given widespread satisfaction.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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