
Constitution for the Social Labor Party

Adopted at Pittsburgh, April 1876

Published in *The Socialist* (New York), vol. 1, no. 9 (June 10, 1876), pg. 3.

Article I: Organization.

The Social Labor Party is a national political organization upon a centralized basis, in which every member is pledged to fully support the Platform, Constitution, and Rules of the Party.

Article II: National Convention.

Sec. 1. The National Convention shall be held annually. Delegates shall be elected in the following manner: Branches numbering 100 members shall be entitled to one delegate; for each additional 100 members, one delegate. Each delegate shall be entitled to only one vote in this Convention.

Sec. 2. The duties of the National Convention shall be to decide upon all questions, propositions, and matters of general interest to the Party, submitted by the various Branches; to settle all disputes which may occur, and to fix the seats of the National Executive Committee and the Board of Supervisors for the ensuing year, also to fix the time and place of meeting for the National Convention. Each delegate shall be entitled to only one vote.

Sec. 3. The National Convention shall have power to nominate candidates for National offices.

Sec. 4. Each Branch shall pay the expenses of its delegates. The expenses of the National Convention shall be paid from the treasury of the party.

Article III: Officers of the Party.

Sec. 1. The National Officers of the Party shall consist of a National Executive Committee of 7 members and a Board of Supervisors consisting of 9 members.

Both of these bodies shall be represented in the National Convention, said representatives shall be without vote and their expenses paid from the treasury of the party.

Article IV: National Executive Committee.

Sec. 1. Within two weeks after the National Convention has been held, the Branches in that place designated to be the seat of the National Executive Committee for the ensuing year shall meet and make nominations for said Committee. The nominees shall be officially announced and within 6 weeks shall be voted for throughout the whole Party. Vacancies shall be filled by election from the Branches in the place without a general vote of the Party.

Sec. 2. The Committee shall hold office for one year and elect from its own members the following officers: two Corresponding Secretaries, one Recording Secretary, one Financial Secretary, and one Treasurer.

Sec. 3. The duties of the Committee shall be: to organize new Branches, to send out agitators or lecturers, to print and circulate pamphlets and documents on the labor question, to represent the Party in its private and public affairs, to send quarterly reports of the progress and financial condition of the Party to the Branches, also to lay before the Branches all matters for settlement in the National Convention 6 weeks before it assembles. The Branches must send such matters to the Committee 9 weeks before the Convention is held.

Sec. 4. It shall have power in conjunction with the Board of Supervisors to refuse admission to the Party and to suspend Branches that violate the interests of the Party. Subject to appeal to the next Convention.

Article V: Board of Supervisors.

Sec. 1. The Board of Supervisors shall be elected in the same manner as the National Executive Committee.

Sec. 2. Its duties shall be: First, To supervise the action and business transactions of the National Executive Committee and of the whole Party. Second, Every 3 months a committee of 5 persons shall be elected by the branches in that place where the National Executive Committee is located. This Committee shall examine the financial accounts of the Executive and within one week shall report the result to the Board of Supervisors to act upon.

Sec. 3. The Board of Supervisors has the right in case of emergency to suspend officers of the Party until the next National Convention.

Article VI: Branches.

Sec. 1. Ten qualified persons, who acknowledge the Platform and Constitution of the Party and are willing to separate themselves from all connection with other political parties, shall be entitled to form a Branch.

Sec. 2. Only one Branch shall be organized in a town or place. Whenever it is necessary, the branch shall hold meetings for agitation in the different wards or districts, but in all cases business meetings shall be held at least once a month.

Sec. 3. German, French, and other *sub-branches* for the accommodation of workingmen unacquainted with the English language may be formed, subject to the same rules.

Sec. 4. Newly organized Branches must apply to the National Executive Committee for admission into the Party and at the same time send dues for the current month and a complete list of members and their occupations; also their numerical order on the books.

Sec. 5. Branches, before taking active part in a political campaign, shall give notice thereof to the National Executive Committee.

Article VII: Local Officers.

Sec. 1. The officers of a branch shall be one Organizer, one Recording Secretary, one Financial Secretary, one Treasurer, also an Auditing Committee of three, all of whom shall be elected annually within 6 weeks after the National Convention has been held. The result of the election shall be immediately reported to the National Executive Committee.

Sec. 2. The office of President is abolished in this organization. A chairman shall be chosen regularly for each meeting.

Sec. 3. The duty of the Organizer shall be: to select a lecturer and a subject for discussion for each agitation-meeting; to organize mass-meetings, and carry on the correspondence with the National Executive Committee.

Sec. 4. In places where two or more Branches are organized, the Organizers of the different Branches shall arrange the proper cooperation of all the Branches in join business and agitation meetings, whenever necessary.

Sec. 5. The Recording Secretary shall keep a correct record of the proceedings in all business meetings.

Sec. 6. The Financial Secretary shall keep a correct list of members and the amount of funds received by the Branch, and make a written report of the same at a regular business meeting.

Sec. 7. The Treasurer shall receive all monies, pay all expenditures, and make a 3-month report of the same.

Sec. 8. The Auditing Committee shall examine and audit the accounts of the various officers, and report at the next regular business meeting of the Branch.

Article VIII: Members and Dues.

Sec. 1. Every person of good character, working for wages in any employment, can become a member of the Party. All other persons can be admitted only by a two-thirds vote of the members present in a regular business meeting. Every member is required to become a citizen of the United States.

Sec. 2. The dues shall be 10 cents per month (no initiation fee), one-half of which shall be forwarded by

the Organization Committee to the National Executive Committee for expenses of national movements, and the balance to remain in the treasury of the Branch for local expenses.

Sec. 3. Members, upon being admitted to the Party, shall receive a copy of the Platform and Constitution, and a card of membership upon payment of 5 cents. This money shall be sent to the National Executive Committee. The card serves as a certificate, and all monthly payments must be receipted thereon.

Sec. 4. Any member who violates the principles or interests of the Party, and is found guilty of the same by a majority vote of the members present in a regular business meeting, shall be expelled. Said member shall have the right to appeal, first to the Board of Supervisors; then to the National Convention, which shall finally decide the matter. No Branch shall have the right to admit such a member until the matter is finally settled.

Sec. 5. Members more than 3 months in arrears of dues shall be suspended until such arrears are paid. Members out of work or delinquent through sickness are exempt from this rule.

Article IX: General Rules.

Sec. 1. All officers and committees shall be elected by majority vote.

Sec. 2. Members are disqualified from holding more than one office.

Sec. 3. The nominations for State, County, or Town officers shall be made by the members of the Party in districts to be represented, in conventions called for that special purpose. Nominations, when made, shall be immediately reported to the National Executive Committee.

Sec. 4. In nominating candidates the following rules shall be observed:

1. The candidate must be an approved member of the Social Labor Party, and one who has been active in its interest for at least one year prior to the nomination.
2. Every candidate must be pledged in writing to uphold the principles and measures laid down in the Platform, and to resign his office upon demand of two-thirds of the members resident in the district from which he is elected.

Sec. 5. Alterations or amendments to the Platform and Constitution can be made only in the National Convention, and thereafter must be laid before the Local Branches to be voted upon before taking effect.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2011. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.