
Constitution of the Workingmen's Party of the United States

[Adopted by its Union Congress, Philadelphia, July 19-22, 1876]

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The affairs of the party shall be conducted by three bodies: The *Congress*, the *Executive Committee*, and the *Board of Supervision*.

Article I: The Congress.

Sec. 1. At least every two years a Congress shall be held, composed of the delegates from the different Sections that have been connected with the party at least two months previously and complied with all their duties. Sections of less than 100 members shall be entitled to one delegate, from 100 to 200 to two delegates, and one more delegate for every additional hundred. (*See also Art. II, Sec. 4d and Art. III, Sec. 4*).

Sec. 2. No suspended Section shall be admitted to a seat before the Congress has examined and passed judgment on its case. It shall, however, be the duty of every Congress to put such cases on the order of business and dispose of them immediately after the election of its officers.

Sec. 3. The Congress defines and establishes the political position of the party, decides finally on all differences within the party, appoints time and place of the next Congress, and designates the seat of the Executive Committee and of the Board of Supervision.

Sec. 4. The entire expenses of the Congress as well as the mileage and salary of the delegates shall be paid by the party and provided for by a special tax to be levied six weeks before the Con-

gress meets. Before the year of 1880, however, no mileage will be paid beyond the 36th degree of northern latitude, nor beyond the 95th degree of western longitude (Greenwich).

Sec. 5. All propositions and motions to be considered and acted upon by the Congress shall be communicated to all Sections at least 6 weeks previously. (*See also Art. II, Sec. 3f; Art. III, Sec. 4; Art. IV, Sec. 7; Art. VI, Sec. 6; and press regulations No. 19.*)

Article II: The Executive Committee.

Sec. 1. The Executive Committee shall consist of 7 members and shall appoint from its own midst one corresponding secretary, one recording secretary, one financial secretary, and one treasurer.

a. The Executive Committee shall be elected by the Section of the place designated as its seat and vacancies shall be filled in the same way.

Sec. 2. The Executive Committee shall hold office from one Congress to the ensuing one.

Sec. 3. The duties of the Executive Committee shall be:

a. To execute all resolutions of Congress and to see to their being strictly observed by all Sections and members;

b. To organize and centralize the propaganda;

c. To represent the organization at home and

abroad;

d. To entertain and open relations with the workingmen's parties of other countries;

e. To make a quarterly report to the Sections concerning the status of the organization and its financial position;

f. To make all necessary preparations for the Congress as well as a detailed report to the same on all party matters.

Sec. 4. Rights and powers of the Executive Committee:

a. The Executive Committee with the concurrence of the Board of Supervision may refuse to admit to the organization individuals and Sections as well as suspend members and Sections till the next Congress for injuring the party-interests.

b. In case of urgency the Executive Committee may make suitable propositions, which propositions become binding if approved of by a majority of the members within two months.

c. The Executive Committee has the right to establish rules and regulations for the policy to be observed by the party-papers, to watch their course, and in cases of vacancy to appoint editors *pro tempore*.

d. The Executive Committee may send the corresponding secretary as delegate to the Congress. The delegate will have no vote and shall be prohibited from accepting any other credentials.

Sec. 5. The salary of the party officers is fixed by the Executive Committee with the concurrence of the Board of Supervision.

(*See also Art. IV, Sec. 6; Art. V, Sec. 2; Art. VI, Sec. 4; Art. VII, Sec. 2; Art. VII, Sec. 13, and of the press regulations No. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 17.*)

Sec. 6. The corresponding secretary shall copy all documents and writing issuing from the Executive Committee, place on file all communications received, and keep a correct record thereof. He shall receive a proper salary.

Sec. 7. The financial secretary shall keep and make out the lists of Sections and members, receive

and record all monies and hand them over to the treasurer, taking his vouchers therefore.

Sec. 8. The treasurer shall receive all monies from the financial secretary, pay bills and honor all orders of the Executive Committee after they are countersigned by the corresponding secretary and one more member of the Executive Committee, make a correct report on the status of the treasury to the Executive Committee in every meeting and to the whole organization every three months, and give security in the amount fixed by the Executive Committee.

Sec. 9. The reports of the treasurer must be examined in a regular meeting of the Executive Committee and endorsed by the same.

Article III: The Board of Supervision.

Sec. 1. The Board of Supervision shall consist of 5 members to hold office and to be elected in the same way as the Executive Committee. (*See Art. II, Sec. 2 and Art. II, Sec. 1a.*)

Sec. 2. The duties of the Board of Supervision shall be:

a. To watch over the activity of the Executive Committee and that of the whole party, to superintend the administration and the editorial management of the organs of the party, and to interfere in case of need.

b. To adjust all differences occurring in the party within 4 weeks after receiving the necessary evidence, subject to the final decision of the Congress. (*See Art. I, Sec. 3.*)

c. To make a detailed report on its actions to the Congress.

Sec. 3. In case of urgency the Board of Supervision may suspend officers and editors till the meeting of the next Congress, such suspension to be submitted at once to a general vote, the result of which shall be made known within 4 weeks thereafter. (*See also Art. II, Sec. 4a and Art. II, Sec. 3.*)

Sec. 4. The Board of Supervision is entitled to send one delegate to the Congress under the

same conditions as the Executive Committee. (*See Art. II, Sec. 4d.*)

(*See also Art. V, Sec. 2; Art. VI, Sec. 4, and press regulations No. 3, 7, 16, and 17.*)

Article IV: Sections.

Sec. 1. Ten (10) persons speaking the same language and being wages-laborers shall be entitled to form a Section, provided they acknowledge the principles, statutes, and Congress resolutions, and belong to no political party of the propertied classes. They shall demand admission from the Executive Committee by transmitting the dues for the current month, and their list of members, this letter to contain the names, residences, and trade of the members, and to show their condition as wages-laborers.

Sec. 2. At least three-fourths of the number of members of a Section must be wages-laborers. (*See Art. VII, Sec. 12.*)

Sec. 3. There shall be no more than one Section of the same language in one place, which may meet in different parts of the town or city for the purposes of an active propaganda. Business meetings shall be held once a month.

Sec. 4. Every Section is required:

a. To make a monthly report to the Executive Committee concerning its activity, membership, and financial situation.

b. To entertain friendly relations with the trades Unions and to promote their formation.

c. To hold regular meetings at least once every two weeks.

d. To direct its efforts exclusively to the organization, enlightening, and emancipation of the working classes.

Sec. 6. No Section shall take part in a political movement without the consent of the Executive Committee.

Sec. 7. Five Sections of different localities shall be entitled to call for the convocation of an extraordinary Congress, such Congress to be

convened if a majority of the Sections decides in its favor.

Article V: Dues and Contributions.

Sec. 1. A monthly due of five (5) cents for each member shall be transmitted to the Executive Committee to meet the expenses of propaganda and administration.

Sec. 2. In case of need and with the consent of the Board of Supervision, the Executive committee is empowered to levy and extraordinary tax.

(*See also Art. I, Sec. 4; Art. VII, Sec. 10; and Art. VII, Sec. 11.*)

Article VI: General Regulations.

Sec. 1. All officers, committees, boards, etc. shall be chosen by a majority vote.

Sec. 2. No member of the organization shall hold more than one office at the same time.

Sec. 3. All officers, authorities, committees, boards, etc. of the organization may be dismissed or removed at any time by a general vote of their constituencies and such general vote shall be taken within one month from the date of the motion to this effect, provided, however, that said motion is seconded by not less than one-third of the respective constituents.

Sec. 4. Expulsion from one Section shall be valid for the whole organization if approved of by the Executive Committee and by the Board of Supervision.

Sec. 5. All members of the organization, by the adoption of this constitution, taken upon themselves the duty to assist each other morally and materially in case of need.

Sec. 6. The Congress alone has the right of amending, altering, or adding to this constitution, subject to a general vote of all Sections, the result of which is to be communicated to the Executive Committee within 4 weeks.

Article VII: Local Statutes.

Sec. 1. Every Section shall choose from its ranks one organizer, one recording and corresponding secretary, one financial secretary, one treasurer, and two members of an auditing committee.

Sec. 2. All these officers shall be elected for 6 months and the Executive Committee shall take timely measures to make the elections of newly-formed Sections correspond with the general sections of the whole party.

Sec. 3. The organizer conducts the local propaganda and is responsible to the Section. The organizers of the various Sections of one locality shall be in constant communication with each other in order to secure concerted action.

Sec. 4. The secretary is charged with the minutes and the correspondence.

Sec. 5. The financial secretary shall keep and make out the list of members, sign the cards of membership, collect the dues, hand them over to the treasurer, and correctly enter them.

Sec. 6. The treasurer shall receive all monies from the financial secretary and hold them subject to the order of the Section.

Sec. 7. The auditing committee shall superintend all books and the general management of affairs, and audit all bills.

Sec. 8. All officers shall make monthly reports to the Section.

Sec. 9. A chairman is elected in every meeting for maintaining the usual parliamentary order.

Sec. 10. The monthly dues of each member shall be not less than ten (10) cents, five cents of which shall be paid to the Executive Committee. (*See Art. V, and Art. I, Sec. 4.*)

Sec. 11. Members being in arrears for 3 consecutive months shall be suspended until fulfilling their duties, always excepted those who are sick or out of work.

Sec. 12. Persons not belonging to the wages class can only be admitted in a regular business

meeting by a two-thirds vote. (*See Art. IV, Sec. 2.*)

Sec. 13. The result of every election within the Section must be at once communicated to the Executive Committee.

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Regulations Concerning the Press of the Party.

1. The Labor Standard and the Arbeiterstimme of New York and the Vorbote of Chicago are recognized as organs and property of the party.

2. The press (i.e. the organs) shall represent the interests of labor, awaken and arouse class-feeling amongst the workingmen, promote their organization as well as the trades union movement, and spread economical knowledge among them.

3. The editorial management of every one of the above papers is entrusted to an editor, appointed either by Congress or by the Executive Committee and Board of Supervision jointly, said editor to receive an appropriate salary.

4. Whenever needed, assistant editors will be appointed by the Executive Committee with the advice and consent of the chief editor.

5. The chief editor is responsible for the contents of the paper and shall be guided in matters of principle by the declaration of principles of the party, in technical and formal matters by the regulations of the Executive Committee. (*See Constitution Art. II, Sec. 4 c.*)

6. Whenever refusing to insert a communication from a member of the organization, the editor shall make it known to the writer thereof directly or by an editorial notice, when appeal may be made to the Executive Committee.

7. The editor shall observe strict neutrality towards all differences arising within the party, till the Board of Supervision and the Congress have given their decision.

8. For every one of the above three papers there shall be elected at their respective place of publication a Council of Administration of 5 members, who jointly with the Executive Committee shall appoint and remove the business manager and his assistants.

9. The Council of Administration shall be chosen for one year in the first week of August of every year.

10. The Council of Administration shall establish rules for the business management, superintend the same, investigate all complaints concerning the business management, redress all grievances if found good, pay their weekly salaries to the editors and managers, and make a full report of the status of the paper every 3 months to all Sections by a circular.

11. The manager is bound to mail punctually and address correctly the papers; he shall receive all monies, book them and hand them over to the Council of Administration, and he shall keep the office of the paper in good order. His salary will be determined by the Congress or by the Executive Committee.

12. The receipts of all monies from without shall be published in the paper.

13. The treasurer of the Council of Administration and the manager shall give security to the Council of Administration to an amount fixed by the Executive Committee.

14. All sums over and above the amount of the security shall be deposited in a bank by the Council of Administration.

15. The chief editor's salary shall be between 15 and 20 dollars per week.

16. All complaints against the business management shall in the first place be preferred to the Council of Administration, in the second place to the Board of Supervision.

17. All complaints against the editorial management shall in the first place be put before the Executive Committee, in the second place before the Board of Supervision.

18. The Sections are responsible for the financial liabilities of newspaper agents nominated by them.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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