
Constitution of the United Communist Party of America.

[founding convention at Bridgman, MI — May 26-31, 1920]

As published in *The Communist* [UCP: Chicago †], v. 1, no. 1 (June 12, 1920), pp. 6-7.
Text of a draft version appears in DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 940, doc. 655.

Article I — Name, Purpose, and Emblem.

Section 1. The name of the organization shall be the United Communist Party of America. It is the American Section of the Communist International.

Section 2. The United Communist Party of America is the organization of the vanguard of the class-conscious workers. Its purpose is the organization and education of the workers for the overthrow of the capitalist state,‡ the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the abolition of the capitalist system, and the development of the Communist society.



Section 3. The emblem of the Party shall be

a hammer, sickle, and sheaves of wheat above the words “All power to the workers,” surrounded by a circular margin with the words “The United Communist Party of America” and “The Communist International.”

Article II — Membership.

Section 1. Any person who accepts the principles and tactics of the Party and of the Communist International, agrees to submit to the party discipline, and to engage actively in its work, shall be eligible for membership, provided he has severed connections with all other political organizations.

Section 2. Applicants must be accepted with due care, and only upon recommendation of 2 members who have been members for at least 3 months, except in newly organized groups in new territories. Every applicant shall be assigned to a recruiting group on probation for 2 months. Before being admitted to full membership, the applicant must familiarize himself with the program and constitution of the party. Applicants can be accepted only by unanimous vote of the group to which application has been made. Whenever practical, applicants shall be assigned to recruiting groups during the probation period.

Section 3. Applicants shall pay an initiation

†- Issue 1 of this publication, edited by Ruthenberg, uses the same headline slug used by the official organ of the same name produced in Chicago by the Ruthenberg group. Thereafter, the headline typography changes, indicating an apparent move to New York City.
‡- The Department of Justice’s draft version has this as “...the forcible overthrow of the capitalist state...” — emphasis mine, T.D.

fee of one dollar and monthly dues of 75 cents. Dues shall be paid during the probation period.

Section 4. Members may transfer from one party unit to another only upon permission of the party unit to which they belong. The unit granting the transfer shall notify the unit to which the member transfers through the regular party channels.

Section 5. No member of the party shall accept or hold any appointive public office, honorary or remunerative, otherwise than through service, nor enter the service of the government in any way except through legal compulsion. No member shall be a candidate for any public office except by instructions of the party.

Section 6. Members of the party who are writers, speakers, and artists shall, so far as possible, place their services at the disposal of the party. Any member using his training in those lines detrimentally to the party shall be disciplined.

Article III — Units of Organization.

Section 1. The basic unit of the party shall be a group of approximately 10 members, and wherever possible, not less than 5 members.

Section 2. Each party group shall elect a group organizer to serve as connecting link between the group and the unit above.

Section 3. Not more than 10 groups shall constitute a branch, and not over 10 branches a section; not over 10 sections a sub-district, and not over 10 sub-districts a district. Districts shall be organized around industrial centers, rather than along state lines.

Section 4. Party members working in the same industrial plants shall, so far as practical, be organized into shop units. Groups may also be organized in unions and other working class organizations.

Section 5. Groups may consist of members speaking the same language, when this does not interfere with the organization of industrial

groups.

Article IV — Administration.

Section 1. The supreme administrative body shall be the convention of the party.

Section 2. Between conventions the supreme body of the party shall be the Central Executive Committee, which shall consist of 10 members elected by the Convention. They shall live in the city in which the national headquarters is located or in adjacent cities. The convention shall also elect 10 alternates for the CEC. In case the list is exhausted, the CEC shall have the power to fill vacancies.

Section 3. The Central Executive Committee shall appoint such party officials as are necessary to conduct the work of the party. It shall carry on the propaganda, organization, and educational work of the party; and publish the party papers, supplying each member with a copy of the official party paper in the respective languages free of charge.

The Committee shall have power to—

(a) Divide the country into districts.

(b) Appoint District Organizers as the representatives of the national organization in these districts.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of the Central Executive Committee to make a monthly report of its activities and party finances.

Section 5. The administrative power of the district shall be vested in the district conventions to be held at least once a year. Between the district conventions the work of administration shall be vested in a District Executive Committee elected by the district convention. The District Executive Committee shall supervise the work of the District Organizer; it shall also appoint Sub-District Organizers, subject to approval of the sub-district committees.

Section 7. Section committees shall consist of the branch organizers. The branch committees

shall consist of the group organizers. The group organizers of a branch shall elect the branch organizer.

Article V — Language Federations.

Section 1. In order that the party shall be a centralized organization capable of united action, no autonomous federations of language groups shall exist in the party.

Section 2. Branches made up of language groups may form sub-district propaganda committees and these may be combined in district propaganda committees. These propaganda committees shall have power to devise plans for propaganda and agitation in their respective languages, which shall be carried out through the regular party channels.

Section 3. The CEC of the party shall annually call a national conference of the respective language groups by request of district committees representing a majority of the language group. These conferences shall plan the work of agitation and organization of the group on a national scale and elect the editors and organizers to carry on the work of the groups. Such editors and organizers shall work under the direction of the CEC of the party.

Section 4. Should the organizers or editors elected by the language conference prove incompetent the CEC may upon protest of district propaganda committees representing a majority of the language group, remove such officials and fill the positions by appointment.

Section 5. All language literature and official party papers shall be published by the CEC of the party.

Article VI — Discipline.

Section 1. Every unit of the party is responsible for the maintenance of party discipline over its members and subordinate groups. Members

expelled from groups may appeal to the branch committee and subordinate units to the next higher unit. District Organizers may appeal from the CEC decision to the convention.

Section 2. Party policies shall be formulated by the convention and by the CEC and all subordinate party units are bound by the decisions of convention and CEC. The work of the district and sub-district committees is strictly limited to administration.

Section 3. All party units shall confine their activities to their respective territorial limits.

Section 4. The Central Executive Committee shall maintain discipline over its members and may remove any of its members by a unanimous vote of the remaining members of the committee.

Section 5. No unit of the party shall publish a party organ without the consent of the CEC.

Section 6. All papers published by the party shall be under the editorial control of the Central Executive Committee.

Article VII — Finance.

Section 1. Applicants for membership shall pay an initiation fee of one dollar, which shall be forwarded to the national organization.

Section 2. Monthly dues shall be 75 cents, which shall be paid into the treasury of the national organization. Dues shall be receipted for by dues stamps issued by the CEC.

Section 3. An organization stamp shall be issued by the CEC which shall be used as receipts for special contributions from the membership.

Section 4. Special assessments may be levied by the convention and by the Central Executive Committee. No member shall be considered in good standing unless he pays such assessments. The organization stamps shall be used to receipt for these assessments.

Section 5. Husband and wife belonging to the same group shall only be obligated to pay 75

cents dues monthly.

Section 6. Unemployed and imprisoned members shall be so reported by the group organizer and shall not be considered in bad standing because of nonpayment of dues.

Section 7. Dues shall be paid monthly by every member. No advance payment shall be made and members who have not paid dues by the first of the succeeding month for the previous month shall be considered in bad standing. Members 3 months in arrears shall be excluded from their group.

Article VIII — Conventions.

Section 1. A national convention shall be held annually at a time and place determined upon by the Central Executive Committee. The CEC may call emergency conventions when requested by District Committees representing a majority of the membership. In case the CEC does not act, District Executive Committees may send delegates to a conference for the purpose of calling the convention.

Section 2. The number of delegates shall be determined by the CEC according to the circum-

stances. Delegates shall be apportioned to districts in proportion to membership.

Section 3. Districts shall apportion the delegates to sub-divisions in such a manner that no sub-division may elect more than one. Provided that such apportionment must be proportionate to the membership.

Section 4. Delegates to national conventions shall be paid railroad expenses and the same per diem as party officials.

Section 5. The convention call and apportionment of delegates must be issued not less than 60 days before the convention.

Section 6. When requested by any District Committee or by 5 Sub-District Committees, the CEC shall submit propositions that are to come before the convention to every party group for discussion at the same time that the call for the convention is issued.

Article IX — International.

Section 1. Delegates and alternates to the International Congress of the Communist International and an International Secretary shall be elected by the convention.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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