

# Bylaws of the General Defense Committee



of the Industrial Workers of the  
World

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*As amended through 2001*

All labor involved in the production of this pamphlet was  
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# Preamble

The aims of this organization shall be to provide defense and relief to members of the working class who are being persecuted for their activity in the class struggle.

Coordinating our efforts will enable the General Defense Committee to oppose the vicious onslaught of the master class with a powerful defense, especially when labor is engaged in industrial strife.

It has been found in past labor struggles that the lack of adequate defense has resulted in many of the most active fighters for labor being arrested and imprisoned for long periods of time or being legally murdered by the employing class. It shall be the purpose of the General Defense Committee to aid those who find themselves persecuted by the powers that be in their struggle for justice and freedom.

It shall also be the purpose of the General Defense Committee to publish and distribute literature exposing the false and reactionary propaganda of the master class.

By organizing the many and centralizing their efforts in each instance, labor will be given the protection of the entire working class, thereby making an injury to one the concern of all.

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# Article I

## Section 1 Name

This organization shall be known as the General Defense Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World, and shall be stated so on membership cards, literature, and letterheads.

## Section 2 Structure

**A** The General Defense Committee shall be composed of GDC Central, GDC Locals initiated by local groups, Industrial Unions and/or General Membership Branches, and GDC Regional Groups initiated by ROCs in areas outside North America.

**B** GDC locals may be known as the GDC of the IWW, or of a particular local IUB or GMB where applicable.

## Section 3 Locals

**A** A GDC local must consist of at least five members in good standing, and shall be open to non-members of the IWW who subscribe to the general principles and aims of the IWW and GDC.

**B** Charters for GDC locals shall be issued and approved by the GEB. A local charter may be placed in suspension by IU, ROC, or GMB with jurisdiction, pending a decision by the GEB to revoke a charter. The GDC local may appeal the decision of the GEB regarding charters to the membership of the IWW.

**C** A quorum to meet for a GDC local shall be five members in good standing.

**D** Each chartered local shall elect a Secretary-Treasurer who shall be the responsible custodian of all branch records, funds and supplies, coordinating efforts with other locals, and reporting all such business and activities to the local IU or GMB and making monthly reports to the CST of the GDC. The local Secretary-Treasurer will be responsible for all minutes of meetings and his/her own monthly financial report to his/her branch; shall endeavor to keep all members in good standing and aware of all referenda.

**E** The local's elected Secretary-Treasurer is the delegate for the local, and as such is responsible for all initiation fees, dues and assessments taken in by the local, and seeing that all funds are properly maintained, and that the per capita set aside for the Central Fund is properly deposited with the CST.

**F** All local officers elected shall be members in good standing of the GDC.

**G** Each local may modify their local dues structure, and produce local assessments stamps.

**H** No chartered local shall enact any legislation or motion conflicting with the constitution of the IWW.

## **Section 4 Internationals**

**A** A GDC International Group will be the equivalent of a "regional local" outside North America for the GDC. Each GDC International must be sponsored by an ROC, consist of at least five members of the GDC in Good Standing, and be open to non members of the IWW who subscribe to the general principles and aims of the IWW and GDC.

**B** Charters of GDC International Groups shall be issued and approved by the GEB. Charters for GDC locals with that International Groups Region shall be issued and approved by the local ROC.

**C** Initiation fees, dues, and assessments may be set by a GDC International Group in that regions currency, and taking into consideration that regions prevailing economic situation. All funds raised by the International Group will be maintained by that group for local defense work with the exception of an initial charter fee of \$25 and a yearly sustainer fee of \$10 (US).

**D** Each International Group shall elect a Secretary-Treasurer who shall be responsible for keeping records, coordinating efforts with other locals, and reporting activities to the local IU or GMB and making quarterly reports to the CST of the GDC.

**F** International Groups will be responsible for their own Bylaws, membership, officers, and means of internal communication. They may modify their local dues structure, and produce local assessments stamps.

**G** No International Group shall enact any legislation or motion conflicting with the constitution of the IWW.

## **Section 5 At Large/Regional Delegates**

**A** In areas where there is no branch or local affiliate or the GDC, the Central Secretary-Treasurer may issue credentials authorizing certain members to act as regional or at large delegates with the authority to initiate new at-large members of the GDC, and/or collect dues and assessments.

**B** Regional delegates must be members in good standing of the GDC.

**C** Regional delegates of the GDC may also serve as delegates for the IWW, but no local branch or body of the IWW may have more than one regional or at-large delegate.

**D** Each regional delegate will be responsible to the GDC for all funds and supplies, including initiation fees, dues and assessments and will pass on such information along with all funds received to GDC Central Administration in a bi-monthly report.

## **Article II**

### **Section 1 Membership**

**A** Any member of the IWW in good standing may be a member of the GDC.

**B** Non-members of the IWW, and those ineligible for membership in the IWW may still join the GDC, as long as they subscribe to the general principles and aims of the IWW and GDC.

**C** All members shall agree to abide by the regulations of the GDC, and the Constitution and regulations of the IWW; to study the principles contained therein; and make themselves acquainted with its purpose.

**D** No expelled member of the IWW shall be eligible for membership in the GDC.

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## **Article III**

### **Section 1 Goals**

**A** The GDC of the IWW wants most to provide support to any member of the working class who finds themselves in legal trouble due to their involvement in the class war.

**B** Any member of the IWW or GDC in good standing may petition the GDC for direct aid in their legal defense on charges resulting from protests, picketing, or other acts related to job actions or activist causes. This aid may include bail, bond, or legal aid, and may take the form of a grant or a no interest loan. Members may also rest assured of solidarity from the organization, including motions of support, letter writing, and public education as to the case (or cases) in question.

**C** Non-members of the IWW and GDC who find themselves embattled with the law may also expect solidarity from the organization, including motions of support, letter writing, and public education as the case (or cases) in question.

**D** GDC Locals and International Groups will always try to engage in strike support and other activities consistent with the aims and principles of the IWW.

## **Article IV**

### **Section 1 General Officers**

**A** The officers of the GDC shall consist of the Central Secretary-Treasurer (CST) and General Defense Steering Committee.

### **Section 2 Duties of the Central Secretary-Treasurer**

**A** The CST of the GDC shall be to take charge of all books, papers and effects of the GDC, shall conduct the correspondence pertaining to his/her office, shall be the custodian of the seal of the organization and will act as a clearing house for stamps, cards and other educational supplies.

**B** The CST shall be responsible for the financial accounting of all funds of the GDC, controlling the Central Fund of the GDC, and all other expenses and special accounts. The CST will be responsible for making a quarterly financial report available to the General Executive Board, the general membership of the IWW, and the membership of the GDC.

C The CST shall publish a quarterly circular for all North American members and International Groups of the GDC to be issued in February, May, August, and November.

D The CST will make himself available each year to the IWW and the GDC during the General Assembly of the Union, reporting on the state of the GDC and on its various projects. Any business, or discussion of the processes, procedures, or methods of the GDC may be handled by the union at this time.

E The term of office shall be for 1 year and shall commence on January 1.

### **Section 3 Election of the Central Secretary-Treasurer**

A Nominees for the office of the CST shall each be a member of the IWW for two years, and a member of the GDC for at least 6 months prior to nomination.

B In the event that no nominee for CST meets these requirements, then they shall be reduced to 1 years membership in the IWW.

C Nominations for the office of CST will be made at the General Assembly of the IWW, beginning in the year 2000, or through the mail with nominations closed by the close of the GA. The election shall be by general referendum of the membership of the IWW.

D Any person elected to the CST's office must remain in good standing with both the IWW and the GDC while holding office.

E No candidate for the CST will be permitted to run or hold other office within the General Administration at the same time, unless no other qualified candidates are available.

F No candidate is eligible for more than three terms in succession. Members who have served three or more consecutive terms as CST shall only have their names placed on the ballot, in the event that two qualified nominees cannot otherwise be secured.

G The General Executive Board of the IWW shall have the power to appoint the Central Secretary-Treasurer of the General Defense Committee whenever the post is left vacant.



## **Section 4 Duties of the Steering Committee**

**A** The General Defense Steering Committee will be made up of three elected representatives of the GDC, the CST, and the Chair of the General Executive Board.

**B** The Steering Committee shall have general supervision of all affairs of the GDC, and shall watch vigilantly over the interests throughout its jurisdiction.

**C** The Steering Committee shall consider petitions of those requesting aid from the GDC, and have the full power to provide whatever help is available up to and including 50% of the Central Fund of the Committee.

**D** The Steering Committee will have general oversight over all GDC publications and guide their policy.

**E** Elected Representatives to the Steering Committee shall each serve a term of office of 1 year, which shall commence on January 1.

**F** Each elected Representative to the Steering Committee is eligible for a maximum of five terms in succession. Members who have served five or more consecutive terms shall only have their names appear on the ballot, in the event that three other qualified nominees cannot otherwise be secured.

**G** In the absence of elected members of the Steering Committee, the remaining participants, the CST, the GST of the IWW, and the Chair of the General Executive Board, may make any and all decisions on the Committees behalf.

## **Section 5 Election of the Steering Committee**

**A** Nominees for the Steering Committee shall each be a member of the IWW for 1 year, and a member of the GDC for 6 months prior to nomination.

**B** Members of the GDC who are not eligible for membership in the IWW may be nominated to serve on the Steering Committee, but must have maintained membership in good standing for at least 2 years prior to nomination.

**C** In the event that no nominee meets these requirements, then they shall be reduced to membership in the IWW and the GDC at the time of nomination.

**D** Nominations for the Steering Committee must be made by mail to the Central Secretary-Treasurer no later than 10 days before the General Assembly, where the nominees will be announced beginning in 2001. The election shall be by special referendum of the membership of the GDC only, mailed out with the November circular of the GDC.

**E** Any person elected to the Steering Committee must remain in good standing with both the IWW and the GDC while holding office.

**F** No elected member of the Steering Committee will be permitted to run for or hold other office within the General Administration as the same time.

**G** In the event of a vacancy on the Steering Committee, with all duly elected members or alternates already serving or being unavailable, the Central Secretary-Treasurer and the GEB Chairperson shall appoint a new committee member until another shall be elected by referendum.

## **Section 6 Charges Against Officers**

**A** Charges against any Officers of the GDC should be filed in writing with the GEB or the General Assembly, following the protocols laid out for charges in the Constitution of the IWW.

## **Article V**

### **Section 1 Funds**

**A** Two funds will be maintained by GDC Central. The General Fund will be maintained as the operating fund for the GDC, for the purpose of expenses, printing, and other needs that may arise. The Central Fund of the GDC shall be retained in a separate account for the purpose of defense work.

**B** Any member of the IWW or GDC in good standing may petition the GDC Steering Committee for direct aid in their legal defense from the Central Fund. This aid may take the form of bail, bond or legal aid, and may take the form of a grant or a no interest loan.

**C** Such funds may normally only be drawn out of the Central Fund at the direction of the Steering Committee, after a proper petition, motion and vote.

**D** In the interest of fulfilling the GDC's goal of strengthening Solidarity with all prisoners of the class war, the CST is permitted to issue checks for "Gifts of Solidarity" to other Defense efforts that are brought to the attention of the GDC. Such gifts may not exceed \$25 each per recipient per year, and the total of all gifts in a calendar year may not exceed \$200. Such gifts may only be issued to Defense Funds and not to individuals.

**E** In the event of an emergency, the CST may seek the approval of the Chair of the GEB to access up to 50% of the funds in the Central Fund for legal aid, or other needs.

**F** The membership of the GDC may requisition funds from the Central Fund for any given initiative by means of a referendum of the entire GDC membership. Said referendum may be called by 15 members of the GDC in good standing or by a chartered local making official petition and balloting to be conducted by the office of the CST.

**G** GDC Locals and International Groups may raise funds through assessments and other fundraising techniques to aid in the defense of the class war prisoners outside the IWW and GDC. These funds will be a separate trust.

**H** Donations sent to the GDC on behalf of the class war prisoners outside the IWW and GDC, will always be so earmarked and always be passed on in a timely fashion.

## **Section 2 Dues**

**A** Initiation fees for GDC membership shall be \$5.00, all of which goes in the GDC General Fund, and dues shall be \$5.00 per quarter.

**B** Each local shall retain 75% of dues collected, and pass the remaining 25% to the Central Fund.

**C** At large members, who are not part of a branch shall pay all their dues directly to the CST, or an at-large or regional delegate. Of these dues, 75% shall be deposited in the Central Fund; the remaining 25% may be deposited in the General Fund.

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**D** Dues and other funds raised by International Groups will be maintained by that group for local defense work. The exception will be an initial charter fee of \$25(US) and a yearly sustainer fee of \$10 (US) to be deposited to the General Fund. These fee may be negotiated or waived by the CST in cases where they represent an economic hardship to the International Group.

## **Article VI**

### **Section 1 Clearing House**

**A** The CST will maintain contact with each local of the GDC, and will function as a Clearing House for all supplies and materials necessary to conduct the business of the GDC.

**B** The Secretary-Treasurer of each local or group will maintain contact with the Clearing House through the CST, shall record all fees, dues, and assessments collected on forms provided by the Clearing House and return this along with all fees and dues money set aside for the General and Central funds to the CST monthly.

**C** All regional delegates or other bearing such credentials shall record all fees, dues, and assessments collected on forms provided bu the Clearing House and return this along with all fees and dues money received to the CST bi-monthly.

## **Article VII**

### **Section 1 Materials**

**A** There shall be a standard label for the GDC. It shall be of a crimson color and always the same in design. The use of the label shall only be vested in our organization.

**B** All branches of the GDC should procure and use such supplies as dues books, dues stamps, official buttons, labels and badges from GDC Central, whenever possible. All such supplies are to be of a uniform design. International Groups may print their own materials, dues books, dues stamps, official buttons, labels and badges, in their own language, if they desire. The general design and format of these materials should remain generally consistent with those produced by the Central Administration, and copies of these materials should be forwarded on to the CST.

C Assessments may be produced by the local and regional groups distributing them in various denominations. Likewise, assessments may be produced by GDC Central of various denominations, and types for various fundraising purposes.

## **Section 2 Referendums**

A A referendum on any organization question, including constitutional amendments, may be initiated by the General Steering Committee of the GDC, by a petition of 20 GDC members in good standing, or by the GEB or the General Assembly of the IWW.

B Referendums shall take place annually, the ballot to be mailed with the November circular. All members in North America will receive their ballots in this manner, and will be responsible for returning their ballots to the CST by mail before the deadline set.

International Groups will handle their own balloting as best suits their situation; reporting their vote totals to the CST by mail before the deadline set.

C ByLaws, as well as future amendments and revisions of the Bylaws must be approved by referendum.

D All changes ratified by a general referendum ballot shall take effect January 1, unless otherwise noted in the measure.

E Resolutions to be voted upon in referendum must be presented to the membership in the quarterly circular prior to the election (Summer-August).

## Charges Against General Officers IWW Constitution Section 7

**A** Charges against any of the General Officers shall be filed in writing with the GEB or the General Convention, at the option of the person filing charges.

Also, in the case where a member of the Union who is not a General Officer is accused of exercising the authority of the GEB or GST without their approval, such charges shall be filed in writing with the GEB or the General Convention, at the option of the person filing charges.

If the charges are filed before the GEB, they shall at once have a copy of the charges sent to the accused, together with the notice of the date of the hearing of the charges. Charges filed before the General Convention must be sent to the General Secretary at least 30 days prior to the date of the convening of the Convention.

On receipt of the charges the General Secretary will forward a copy of the same to the accused and notice to appear at the convention for trial.

**B** Any decision of the GEB on charges tried by them shall be subject to appeal to the next General Convention and from the General Convention to the general membership. The decision of the General Convention on charges can be appealed to the general membership. This appeal must be filed with the General Administration within ninety (90) days from the adjournment of the General Convention. The cost of appealing to the general membership shall be borne by the party taking the appeal. If the vote on appeal results in the favor of the party taking the appeal then the General Organisation shall refund the cost of the appeal.

## Offenses IWW Bylaws Section 7

Among the offenses for which discipline and penalties may be imposed against any member, or branch, or industrial union or other grouping:

**A** willfully failing to comply with the Preamble, Constitution, or laws of the IWW, or the grouping to which they belong.

**B** engaging in corruption, financial malpractice in respect of the funds or property of the organisation.

**C** attempting to secede, merge, dissolve or destroy any local or group of the IWW contrary to the provisions in the Constitution.

**D** bringing false charges with malicious intent against a member, officer, or grouping of the Union.

The discipline and penalty which may be imposed shall include censure, temporary suspension, disqualification or removal from office or official position, expulsion, or any combination thereof.