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L. Churchward
Collection.

Constitution of the
Communist Party of
Australia 1943.

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The Communist Party of Australia is a working class political party carrying forward to-day the best traditions of Australian democracy, the struggle against convictism, for self-government, Eureka, the fight for social reforms, the struggle against imperialist war and fascism. Upholding the achievements of democracy and standing for the right of the majority to direct the destinies of our country, the Communist Party fights with all its strength to unite the masses to resist any and every effort, whether it comes from abroad or within, to impose upon the Australian people the arbitrary will of any minority group, or party or clique. It is devoted to the defence of the immediate interests of the workers, farmers and middle class against capitalist exploitation. The Communist Party works tirelessly in the interests of Australian security and independence. It works for the preparation of the working class for its historic mission to unite and lead the Australian people to extend these democratic principles to their necessary and logical conclusion: by establishing a common

ownership of the national economy through a government of the toiling people; the abolition of class divisions in society by the ending of exploitation of man by man and nation by nation, i.e., by the establishment of Socialism, according to the scientific principles given us by the great teachers of mankind, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, expressed in the policy of the Communist International.

The Communist Party works toward the free co-operation of the Australian people with those of other lands, striving toward a world without oppression and war—a world brotherhood of man.

To this end the Communist Party of Australia lays down the following basic rules:—

RULE 1 **NAME**

The name of the organisation shall be the Communist Party of Australia.

RULE 2 **EMBLEM**

The emblem of the Party shall be the crossed hammer and sickle, representing the unity of the worker and farmer.

RULE 3 **MEMBERSHIP**

CLAUSE A: Any person, 18 years and over, regardless of race, sex, color, religion or nationality, residing within Australia, and

who is loyal to the working class movement, shall be eligible for membership.

CLAUSE B: A Party member is one who accepts the Party programme, attends the regular meetings of the Branch, pays dues regularly, and engages in some form of Party activity.

CLAUSE C: An applicant for membership shall sign an application form and shall be nominated by two members of the Communist Party. Such application shall be dealt with without delay by the basic organisation of the Party (workplace or local Branch) to which it is presented. The applicant shall be enrolled in the Party at the following Branch meeting at which he should be in attendance. A majority vote of the membership of the Branch, present at a regular meeting, shall admit the applicant to membership. Within two weeks after admission, the new member must be supplied with a membership card and obtain a copy of the Party Constitution.

RULE 4 **DUES**

CLAUSE A: The initiation fee and dues payments shall be as follows: Those in receipt of an income of over £2/10/- per week, initiation fee 2/-, dues 6d, per week. All others, including the lowest ranks of

the Armed Forces, initiation fee 6d, dues 3d per week.

CLAUSE B: All members shall pay an International Levy of 2/- per year.

CLAUSE C: No levy shall be struck by any Party organisation except by special permission of the Central Committee. Special levies may be struck by the Central Committee or National Congress.

CLAUSE D: Members two months in arrears in payment of dues cease to be members of the Party in good standing, and must be informed thereof, unless military or similar duties deprive them of the necessary Branch contact. In this latter case members must make themselves financial at the first opportunity. This applies also to Clause E.

CLAUSE E: Members who are four months in arrears shall have their names removed from the Party rolls. Every member three months in arrears shall be officially informed of this Rule, and a personal effort shall be made to bring such member back into good standing. However, if a member, whose name for these reasons has been removed from the rolls, applies for readmission within six months from the date upon which his name was removed from the

rolls, he may, on the approval of the next higher Party Committee, be permitted to pay up arrears of dues and be granted continuity of membership.

RULE 5 **RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS**

CLAUSE A: It is the fundamental right and duty of the Party membership to participate fully in determining the policies of the Party and in the election of its leading committees as provided for in the Constitution.

CLAUSE B: Party members disagreeing with any decision of a Party organisation or committee have the right to appeal against that decision to the next higher body, and may carry the appeal to the highest bodies of the Communist Party of Australia, the Central Committee and the National Congress. Whilst the appeal is pending the decision must, nevertheless, be carried out by every member.

CLAUSE C: The decisions of the National Congress shall be final, and every Party member and Party organisation shall be duty bound to recognise the authority of the Congress decisions and the leadership elected by it.

CLAUSE D: All members should strive to

improve their political knowledge and to master the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

CLAUSE E: It is the duty of all members to strengthen their connections with the masses, to respond promptly to the needs and demands of the working people, and to explain to them the policy and decisions of the Party. All Party members who are eligible shall be financial members of the Trade Union of their calling.

CLAUSE F: All Party members in mass organisations (Trade Unions, Farmers Organisations, Cultural and other bodies) shall co-operate to promote and strengthen them, and shall abide by the democratic decisions of these organisations.

Rule 6 DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

CLAUSE A: The Communist Party of Australia is based on the Leninist principle of Democratic Centralism, which means:

- (1) The election of all leading Party bodies from the highest to the lowest;
- (2) Periodical reports of the Party committees and leading organs to the organisations to which they are responsible;
- (3) Strict Party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority;

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(4) The decisions of higher bodies to be absolutely binding upon lower bodies.

CLAUSE B: All Party organisations have autonomy in deciding local questions, provided that their decisions do not conflict with the policy of the Party.

CLAUSE C: All officials and leading committees of the Party from the Branch committees up to the highest committees, are elected either directly by the membership or through their elected representatives.

CLAUSE D: Any Party official may be removed at any time from his position by a majority vote of the organisation which elected him, or to which he is responsible, providing in this latter case the approval of the next higher Party Committee is obtained.

CLAUSE E: Requests for the release of Party members from responsible posts may be granted only by the Party organisations which elected them or, providing the next higher Party Committee agrees, by the organisation to which they are responsible.

RULE 7 STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF PARTY ORGANISATIONS

National Congress

CLAUSE A: The supreme authority in the Communist Party of Australia is the

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National Congress, which shall be held at least every three years. Special National Congresses shall be called by a majority vote of the Central Committee or by a request from Party organisations representing 50 per cent. of the entire Party membership.

CLAUSE B: The National Congress shall be composed of delegates elected by State, City or District Conferences according to numerical strength and also the members of the outgoing Central Committee. The basis of representation shall be determined by the Central Committee.

CLAUSE C: For at least two months prior to the Congress, discussion shall take place in all Party organisations on the main resolutions and problems coming before the Congress. During this discussion all Party organisations have the right to propose resolutions or amendments to the draft resolutions of the Central Committee for consideration at the Congress. Proposals may also be submitted for alterations to the Party Constitution.

CLAUSE D: The National Congress reviews the work of the Party and the outgoing Central Committee since the preceding Congress. It determines the direction of

the policy to be pursued by the Party in the ensuing period, and considers all major tactical and organisational questions and proposed amendments to the Party Constitution. It elects the Central Committee which shall consist of full members and of candidates having at least five years' active membership. The number of members and candidates to be elected to the Central Committee and the method of election shall be determined by the Congress. A candidate can become a full member of the Central Committee in the event of the death or removal of a full member. When attending Central Committee meetings candidates will have the right to speak but not to vote.

Central Committee

CLAUSE A: The Central Committee, which shall hold full meetings at least quarterly, is the highest authority of the Party between National Congresses, and is responsible for enforcing the Constitution and securing the execution of the general policies adopted by the democratically-elected delegates at the National Congress. The Central Committee represents the Party as a whole. The Central Committee organises and supervises its various depart-

ments and sub-committees; leads the political and organisational work of the Party; appoints the editors of its press, who work under its leadership and control; organises and guides all undertakings of importance for the entire Party; distributes the Party forces and controls the Central treasury. The Central Committee, by majority vote of its members, may call special State, City or District Conferences. An audited financial statement shall be submitted to the first Central Committee meeting in each year, and by the Central Committee to the National Congress.

CLAUSE B: The Central Committee elects from its members a Political Committee and such other sub-committees or departments as may be necessary. The Political Committee is charged with the responsibility of carrying out the decisions and the work of the Central Committee between its full sessions. It is responsible to the Central Committee for all decisions. The size of the Political Committee shall be decided upon by a majority vote of the Central Committee.

Central Control Commission

CLAUSE A: The Central Committee elects a Central Control Commission consisting of Party members with at least five years'

Party standing.

On various disciplinary cases such as those concerning violations of Party unity, discipline, honesty or ethics, or concerning lack of class vigilance or Communist firmness in facing the class enemy, or concerning spies and other agents of the class enemy—the Central Control Commission shall be charged with making investigations and decisions, either on appeals against the decisions of lower Party bodies, or on cases which are referred to it by the Central Committee, or on cases which the Central Control Commission itself considers necessary to take up directly. It also supervises the auditing of the financial books and records of the Central Committee and its enterprises.

CLAUSE B: The decisions of the Central Control Commission shall be endorsed by the Political Committee before being put into effect.

State Organisation

CLAUSE A: The State Organisation comprises all Party organisations within a given State. The highest body in the State is the State Conference which meets annually, with the exception of Queensland, which shall meet at least every two years. It shall elect the

State Committee. The number of members and candidates of the State Committee shall be determined by the State Conference. Except with special permission of the Central Committee, members of the State Committee must have a minimum of two years' Party membership. The State Conference consists of delegates elected according to membership by District Conferences and Branches not attached to a District, and of the members of the outgoing State Committee. The basis of representation to the State Conference is determined by the State Committee in consultation with the Central Committee.

CLAUSE B: The State Committee, which is the highest authority in the State between Conferences, shall meet at regular intervals as decided by the State Committee in consultation with the Central Committee. The State Committee shall elect an Executive to carry out the work of the Committee between meetings. The State Committee is responsible for the conduct of all Party work in the State between conferences, and shall maintain the closest possible connections with the Central Committee.

CLAUSE C: The Central Committee may, in any State, abolish the State Committee

and form Metropolitan, District and other Committees to lead the work in areas of the State, the Central Committee being responsible for co-ordinating their work:

District Organisation

CLAUSE A: The District Organisation comprises all Party branches in a given locality as determined by the State Committee. The highest body in the district is the District Conference which meets at least annually. It elects the District Committee and, when necessary, delegates to the State Conference, or National Congress. The basis of representation to the District Conference is decided upon by the District Committee in consultation with the State Committee. The District Committee, which is the highest authority in the district between Conferences, organises the application of the decisions of the higher Party Committees, takes up economic and political questions arising in the District, and gives leadership and assistance to the Party organisations within the District.

CLAUSE B: Zone Committees may be established by District Committees covering factory and local Branches.

Branch Organisation

CLAUSE A: The basic organisations of

the Communist Party of Australia are the workplace and local Branches. Branches that do not come within these categories can be established only with the agreement of the Central Committee.

CLAUSE B: The Branch is the organisation which links the Party with the people. The tasks of the Branch include: Carrying out of national, State and local campaigns in the workplace or locality; building the United Front and People's Front; organising systematic agitation and propaganda, including sales of the Party press and literature; collection of contributions for Party funds; recruitment of new members; organisation of social, cultural and educational work both within the Party and among the people generally.

RULE 8 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

CLAUSE A: Breaches of Party discipline by individual members, financial irregularities, as well as any conduct or action detrimental to the Party's prestige and influence among the working masses and harmful to the best interests of the Party, may be punished by censure, public censure, removal from responsible posts, and by expulsion. Serious breaches of discipline by Party Committees may be punished by the

removal of the Committee by the next higher Party Committee, which shall then organise new elections by the membership.

CLAUSE B: Charges against individual members may be made by any person—Party or non-Party—in writing, to a Branch of the Party or to any leading Committee. The Party Branch has the right to recommend to the District Committee the expulsion of a member; in the meantime, the Branch may suspend such member from attendance at Branch meetings.

CLAUSE C: All parties concerned in breaches of discipline shall have the fullest right to appear, to bring witnesses and to testify before the Party organisation. Any member against whom disciplinary action has been taken has the right of appeal against the decision to the higher committees, up to the National Congress of the Party.

CLAUSE D: Any members found to be strike-breakers, degenerates, drunkards, betrayers of Party confidence, provocateurs, voluntary associates of Trotskyites, advocates of terrorism as a method of Party policy, chauvinists, or, in general, members whose actions are detrimental to the Party and the working class, shall be expelled

from the Party and if considered necessary exposed before the general public.

RULE 9 AFFILIATION

The Communist Party of Australia is affiliated to the Communist International and participates in International Congresses together with the Communist Parties of other lands. Resolutions and decisions of International Congresses shall be considered and acted upon by the supreme authority of the Communist Party of Australia, the National Congress, or between Congresses, by the Central Committee.

RULE 10 AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

This Constitution may be amended by a decision of a majority of the voting delegates present at the National Congress, provided that the proposed amendment has been published in the Central Party press or Congress discussion material at least 14 days prior to the Congress.

RULE 11 RIGHT TO MAKE BY-LAWS

CLAUSE A: By-laws shall be adopted, based on this Constitution, for the purpose of establishing uniform procedure for the proper functioning of the Party organisations. By-laws may be adopted or changed by majority vote at the National Congress or,

between Congresses, by majority vote of the Central Committee.

CLAUSE B: State by-laws, not in conflict with the National Constitution and by-laws, may be adopted or changed by majority vote of the State Conference or by the State Committee between Conferences.

BY-LAWS

The following are the by-laws adopted by the Communist Party of Australia, in accordance with its Constitution, for the purpose of carrying out the principles, rights and duties as established in the Constitution in a uniform manner in all Party organisations.

BASIC ORGANISATIONS

The basic organisations of the Communist Party of Australia are the workplace and local Branches. A workplace Branch consists of those Party members who are employed in the particular workplace. Workplace Branches shall be organised in every factory, shop, mine, dock, office, etc., where sufficient Party members are employed. A local Branch consists of members of the Party living in the same locality. Local Branches shall be organised on the basis of streets, municipal wards or suburbs in the cities, and in country towns. In all Branches

having seven or more members a Branch committee may be elected consisting of Secretary, Chairman, Treasurer, and such other officers as the Branch may decide.

The Branch committee has the task of preparing the agenda and proposals for the Branch meeting, dealing with correspondence and preparing recommendations on matters necessary to place before the Branch, attending to the administrative tasks, organising control over the execution of Branch decisions, and between Branch meetings, of making decisions on matters that require immediate attention. The Branch committee shall report regularly on its work, which shall be subject to review by the membership. Branch officers shall be elected in June of each year. Special elections shall be held with the agreement of the District Committee. All officers shall be elected by majority vote of the membership at a specially designated meeting, of which the Branch membership shall be advised at least 14 days beforehand.

The treasurer shall submit an audited financial statement to the Branch at least quarterly.

The order of business at the Branch meeting shall be based on the following plan,

but can be amended to suit the requirements of each Branch:—

1. Educational discussion.
2. Admission of new members.
3. Executive report, including check on fulfillment of previous decisions.
4. Other reports as decided upon by the Branch.
5. General Business.

DISTRICT ORGANISATION

A District consists of an unlimited number of Branches in an area as decided upon by the State Committee.

The District Conference determines the size of the District Committee which, as a rule, should not exceed nine members. The District Committee elects from among its members a Secretary, Chairman, Treasurer, Literature and Press Manager, and such other officers as deemed necessary. It also elects a Secretariat composed of the Secretary, Chairman and one other member, which is responsible for carrying out the day-to-day work of the District Committee and preparing the agenda for District Committee meetings. The District Committee shall receive a monthly audited financial statement, a copy of which must be forwarded to the State Committee. The full District

Committee shall meet at least fortnightly.

STATE ORGANISATION

For two months prior to the State Conference discussion shall take place in all Party organisations within the State on the main resolutions and problems coming before the Conference. During this discussion, all Party organisations have the right to propose resolutions or amendments to the draft resolutions of the State Committee for consideration at the State Conference.

The State Committee shall elect from among its members a State Executive consisting of not more than seven members, including the Secretary, Chairman, and Treasurer. The State Committee shall elect also such other office-bearers as deemed necessary, including the editors of the State Press, establish responsibility for the supervision of various phases of activity and create such permanent or temporary sub-committees as may be necessary for the efficient conduct of its activities. Where a State Committee, by a majority vote of its members and in agreement with the Central Committee, removes any member from the Committee, or replaces any member who is unable to serve because of sickness or other causes, the new full member of the

State Committee shall be chosen from among the alternate members.

An Accounting Committee established by the State Committee shall audit the accounts of the State Treasurer at least once per month, and shall also organise and supervise the system of auditing throughout the State.

Special State Conferences shall be called:—

- (a) By the State Committee following a written request from Branches representing one-third of the membership of the State organisation.
- (b) By a majority vote of the State Committee.
- (c) By request of the Central Committee.

A decision for the holding of a special conference must have the endorsement of the Central Committee.

The State Committee, subject to the approval of the Central Committee, shall have the power to issue an official organ, publish pamphlets and other literature.

TRANSFERS AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Members who move from one workplace or locality to another and desire a transfer must receive it through their Branch. Where a Branch to which the transfer is granted is in the same district, it shall be finalised by the District Committee. Where it is in

another district, a duplicate transfer shall be forwarded by the Branch through the District Committee to the State Committee, which shall arrange for the attachment of the member to his new Branch. Where the transfer is to another State or abroad it must be effected through the Central Committee.

No member transferring shall be accepted into a new Branch without his transfer and the endorsement of the appropriate Committee. Before receiving transfers, members shall be fully financial and have finalised all other financial obligations to the Branch.

No member has the right to take leave of absence without the permission of his Branch. Leave of absence, not exceeding one month, may be granted by the Branch. An extended leave of absence, upon the recommendation of the Branch, shall be acted upon by the next higher committee of the Party. Before leave of absence is granted the member shall arrange for payment of dues and settlement of other financial obligations.

READMISSION

Expelled members applying for readmission must submit a written statement, and their applications may not be finally acted