

Australian Socialist League, Constitution [Amended and Adopted, Easter 1898]

Name

1. That this organisation shall be called the Australian Socialist League.

Objects

2. The establishment of a Co-operative Commonwealth, founded on the collective ownership of the land and the tools of production.

Methods

3. The industrial and political organisation of the workers, the holding of lectures, the distribution of literature, and the election of Socialists to all public bodies Municipal Councils, and Parliament.

Membership

4. No person shall be eligible for membership in any branch of this League, who is a member of any other political organisation. Persons desirous of joining shall be shown this rule in order that they may pledge themselves thereto.
5. Any person desirous of becoming a member in any branch of the League shall be proposed in writing at a meeting of members, the name shall be read up at the two following meetings of the Branch Executive, and shall then be balloted for at the next meeting of members.
6. Branches may issue cards of honorary membership annually to persons who pledge themselves to the principles and policy of the League, and are not members of any other political body. They may take part in any meeting of the branch, but shall not vote or hold any office in the branch or league.

Subscription

7. The minimum subscription shall be 6d per month, payable in advance.
8. Any member three months in arrears, unless disabled by illness or lack of employment, shall be suspended until dues owing by him are paid. Branches
9. Branches of the League may be established in any part of the colony and may include one or more electorates. They shall have entire control over their own affairs, subject to the Constitution of the League.

Central Branch

10. All members of the League residing within the boundaries of the city of Sydney shall be members of the Central Branch, together with members resident in other parts of the colony not worked by any other Branch. General Executive
11. When four branches of the League (including the Central Branch) shall have been established the Executive of the Central Branch shall call for nominations for a General Executive, such General Executive to consist of a General Secretary, a General Treasurer and a Committee of eight (to be elected from nominations received). Thereafter the members of the General Executive shall be elected annually.

Duties of General Executive

12. The General Executive shall exercise a supervising control over the work of the League; shall have a determining voice in the selection of Parliamentary candidates, and where no Branch exists, choose such candidates; shall deal with such matters of local dispute between Branches and their members which may be referred to them for decision. Provided that in all cases the decisions of the Executive shall be subject to an appeal to the member of the League, where practicable, such appeal to be final.

13. They shall submit a Report and Balance sheet to the Annual Conference, detailing the work and financial position of the League during the past twelve months, the Balance Sheet to be audited by auditors appointed by the Conference.
14. The General Executive shall summon the Annual Conference, and carry out any instructions received from Conference.

Election of General Executive

15. Three months prior to date the of Annual Conference the General Secretary shall call for nominations from members for the offices of General Secretary, General Treasurer, and other members of the General Executive. Nominations shall close one month later, and the General Secretary shall then prepare and issue ballot papers to members through Branch Secretaries returnable to him not later than seven clear days before the date of assembling of the Annual Conference. On the assembling of the Annual Conference they shall elect three scrutineers from their members to examine and declare the ballot. Members entitled to vote shall be those for whom each Branch shall have paid the capitation fee for at least the preceding three months. In the event of vacancies occurring on the General Executive they shall be filled in the manner prescribed for the annual elections.

Annual Conference

16. A Conference shall be held annually to which each Branch shall be entitled to send two delegates for the first 25 members or part thereof, and one delegate for each additional 25 members.
17. The business of the Annual Conference shall consist of proposals of which notice shall have been given to the General Executive, and have been forwarded by them to Branches for their consideration; and of any recommendations which the General Executive may place upon the business paper issued to the Branches.

Special Conference

18. Should three or more Branches decide that a Special Conference is desirable, they shall forward a requisition to the General Executive, stating the proposals it is desired to bring before such Conference, and the General Executive shall take a vote of members as to whether the Conference be held, the business of the Conference to consist of the proposals submitted by these Branches. Should the General Executive consider a Special Conference desirable, they shall forward to the Branches the propositions they desire to place before the Conference, and take a vote as to whether such Conference be held. When a Conference is decided upon the initiative of the General Executive, they shall elect one of their number to represent them at the Conference.

Selection of Candidates

19. For the selection of candidates to contest Parliamentary seats, the names of candidates for selection shall be submitted to an aggregate vote of the members of the Branch covering the electorates to be contested. In the case of municipal and other elections, Branches shall deal with them as they may deem advisable, subject to the provisions of Rule 23.
20. All candidates elected under the auspices of this League to Parliament, municipal councils, and other public bodies shall be subject to recall in the event of their failing to uphold the principles and platform of the organisation. The recall to be decided by a majority of the members of the League.
21. Before a member's name can be submitted to ballot for selection as a candidate for a public office, the member shall place in the hands of the Secretary of the Branch a resignation of that position, which, in the event of election, shall be forwarded to the General Secretary of the League, to be held until such time as the member is

adjudged, in accordance with the preceding rule, to have failed to uphold the platform and principles of the League, when the resignation shall be forwarded to the proper quarter. He shall also sign a declaration to the effect that he is in accord with these rules, and signs the resignation of his own free will.

Declaration

22. The declaration shall read as follows:—In accordance with Rule 18 of the Australian Socialist League, with which I fully agree, I do, of my own free will, sign the resignation of the office of

Signed

Witness

23. No member shall be deemed to be selected to represent the League in an election for any public office until his resignation and accompanying declaration shall have been forwarded to the General Executive, and his selection shall have been endorsed by that body.

24. Except in the case of formation of a new branch, when officers shall be elected from its members at the first meeting held, no persons shall be eligible to hold office in the League unless he has been a member for at least six months. No member shall be eligible for selection as candidate for any public office unless he has been a member for the twelve months prior to the date of his nomination.

Financial

25. Branches shall pay a capitation fee of one penny per member per month to the General Executive; also a sustentation fee of 2s 6d per year.

26. Towards expenses of the annual Conference Branches shall pay the sum of 2s 6d for each delegate represented. Any further sum required shall be contributed pro rata by the members of the League.

27. The Central Branch may receive subscriptions towards the general funds of the League, or may open subscriptions for special funds. On the establishment of the General Executive, these moneys shall be handed over to that body.

Formation of New Branches

28. Persons desirous of forming a Branch of his League shall communicate with the General Executive, who shall forward a copy of the Constitution of the League in return, and on receiving an assurance that there are at least twelve persons willing to accept the Constitution and become members, shall declare the League established.

General

29. In the event of any member being charged with acting contrary to or betraying the interest of the League, the charge shall be placed in writing before the Executive of the Branch who shall consider and report to the next meeting of members or shall call a special meeting if they think necessary, and the offending member may be expelled only by a majority vote at the same meeting, after being summoned to attend.

30. Members of the General Executive can take part in the meetings of any Branch, but shall not vote except in their Branch.

31. The General Secretary and General Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of all Conferences with the right of taking part in the deliberations thereof, but without power to vote.

32. In the event of any member of the General Executive being absent from three consecutive meetings, unless a satisfactory explanation is given, his seat shall be declared vacant.

Alteration of Rules

33. Should any branch consider an amendment of Constitution or of Demands necessary, it shall forward the proposed amendment to the General Executive, who shall submit it to a ballot of the members of the League.

Harry Holland Collection, ANU Archives of Business and Labor, Item P5/1/1506.
Reprinted in David Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp.259-262