

**SOCIALIST
LABOUR PARTY**

CONSTITUTION

NOVEMBER 1977

PRICE 10p

INTRODUCTION TO
SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY CONSTITUTION

The Socialist Labour Party was founded in November 1977 when a decision was taken at our inaugural conference in Liberty Hall Dublin to form a new political party. Its aim is to create a genuine socialist democracy in the 32 counties of Ireland.

Such a society will depend on the initiatives of many thousands of people and it will require dedication and unselfishness which we believe is readily available. We have set ourselves uncompromising standards in order to achieve our aims.

Ireland is a society that for too long has tolerated acute poverty, emigration and unemployment, with the consequent gross wastage of resources and the affronts to human dignity.

We believe that no other political party in the country will produce the necessary changes to bring about the creation of new wealth, and the redistribution of wealth and power from the rich to the working class and that, therefore we have a role in socialist education and agitation.

Through our local branches and various associated groups, Young Socialists, Womens' Rights, unemployed and trade unionists we believe in a thorough democratic involvement of our membership in decision-making and action and that this is a vital factor in the creation of a genuine socialist democracy.

Dave Neligan,
President

January 1978

9. It affirms that the State shall not be integrated with any of the existing world power blocs, and shall co-operate on the basis of equal rights with the people of other countries for the purpose of building up an international community on the same principles of Social Democracy and Human Rights as must inspire the National community.
10. Its objective shall be the expansion of democracy into all the principle forms of production, distribution and exchange. It therefore seeks the extension of communal and co-operative forms of ownership of the commanding heights of the economy. This includes the public ownership of banks and other financial institutions, all the natural resources, and all other large companies.
11. As part of the extension of democracy, it shall seek to achieve complete worker control in all industries and enterprises. It shall fight for:
 - (a) Workers control of hiring and firing.
 - (b) Workers control of production speeds and manning levels.
 - (c) Workers control of safety and occupational health.
 - (d) Workers inspection of all books, records and information in private and public concerns.
12. It shall seek to make Art and Literature accessible to the whole Nation, to encourage the development of Art and Literature, to seek the financial security of the individual creator, and to develop the native cultural traditions in both English and Irish. It shall seek the establishment of a press council, and to secure through the media a true presentation of the values and traditions of the working people as opposed to the gross consumerism of international capitalism.
13. It shall seek the general promotion of the Irish language and culture so that the effort to create a bi-lingual Nation may succeed.
14. It shall seek the extension of democracy into the entire educational system, by the involvement of, and the control by, parents, teachers and students, and by the provision of equal educational opportunities for all.
15. It shall struggle towards the following goals and shall work to introduce a National Constitution which will guarantee:
 - (a) The freedom of political thought and activity of all its citizens.
 - (b) The end of repressive legislation.
 - (c) The separation of Church and State in all areas.
 - (d) The outlawing of discrimination against all citizens for reasons of belief, religion, sexual preference, age or language.

16. It recognises that sexism and discrimination against women in all its forms divides and holds back the struggle of working people for a democratic socialist society. It therefore commits itself to a forceful policy in order to bring about greater awareness that such demands are in the interests of all working people, women and men. It recognises that sexism and discrimination against women operates at all levels within society and that a conscious fight must be made to eliminate its effects within the Party to ensure the fullest participation of women in the workings of the party. It therefore recognises and supports fully the rights of women to autonomous organisation as they themselves deem necessary within the party and outside it. It recognises the right of all women to work and gain equal terms of employment with their male counterparts. The provision of state financed, comprehensive 24 hours child-care facilities, under community control, for working and non-working mothers.
17. It shall be committed to the establishment of a National Economic Plan for the purpose of developing our resources to the full and of providing full employment of all our people; such a plan must reflect the social objectives as outlined in the Constitution. As a step towards the establishment of a planned economy in a workers republic it will fight for the following: full pay (alternative work or full maintenance at take home rates of pay for all those laid off); to cut the hours, not the jobs; for work-sharing and an immediate ban on overtime without loss of average earnings; for an immediate end to productivity dealing; for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay to force employers to take on new labour; for direct action to abolish business secrecy; to arm the shop-floor against the bosses plans; to open the banks and committees to workers' inspection; for direct action to stop closures; for occupation of all plants threatening closure holding them to ransom, while demanding nationalisation without compensation under workers control; for a national scheme of useful public works paid at union rates; for all unions to register the unemployed, to give them full membership rights and for a trade union campaign among unemployed youth.
18. It shall seek the expansion of that part of the entitlements of citizens on the basis of need without direct charge, in order to progressively reduce the importance of wage and salary differential and introduce a basic minimum wage.
19. It shall seek to create an egalitarian society in which social ownership shall supercede personal and co-operative ownership.
20. It shall be committed to seeking maximum public participation at local, regional and national level of all its citizens.

- 21. It shall ensure that the activities, accounts and decisions of all Government departments and private enterprises be open to public inspection and discussion.
- 22. It shall seek to eliminate regional imbalances in wealth and economic development.
- 23. It shall seek to secure the widest possible public understanding and acceptance of socialism through education, and the successful implementation of individual Socialist measures by Parliamentary, industrial and other appropriate means.
- 24. It shall promote the development of agriculture on the basis that the land is a national resource and must be fully utilised in the interests of the Nation as a whole

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Section 2: MEMBERSHIP

- 1. Any person who subscribes to the Aims and Objectives of the Party, accepts its constitution and is not a member of any other political party may be accepted as an individual member of the party.
- 2. A party member may also be a member of an organised political tendency within the Party, and of non-party political or quasi-political organisations. However the member shall be required to give his or her public loyalty to the Party and its Programme.
- 3. The National Executive of the Party shall be empowered to expel any member whose conduct is considered detrimental to the interests of the Party. Any member so expelled shall be entitled to appeal such a decision to an Appeal Board elected by Annual Conference. Both the Executive and the expelled member may further appeal the Board's ruling to Annual Conference, whose decision is final. The Appeal Board shall consist of 7 people who are not also members of the Executive.
- 4. Each Party member shall be required to pay a membership fee, the amount of which shall be determined by the Annual Conference. Any person who is more than 6 months in arrears in the payment of his/her membership fee shall be deemed to have ceased to be a member of the Party.
- 5. The General Secretary of the Party shall maintain a register of paid-up Party members.

- 6. Official Party spokespersons, while publically representing the Party, shall be required to uphold Party policy as laid down by National Conference. All members of the Party shall have the right within the Party to dissent from items of Party policy, and to work to change these policies subject only to Sections 2.2 and 2.3 above. The Party shall seek to develop a healthy internal democratic life and promote discussion on the strategy and tactics necessary to achieve its objective. Any members will be entitled to document their opinions on these questions and submit them to the membership of the Party.

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Section 3: BRANCH ORGANISATION

- 1. The basic organisational unit of the Party shall be the Constituency Branch.
- 2. Each Branch shall have as its functional area a Parliamentary Constituency. Where the Party membership in the Constituency does not justify the establishment of a separate organisation, one Branch may on a temporary basis take responsibility for two or more constituencies.
- 3. Each Branch shall establish Ward and District organising committees as appropriate.
- 4. The Branch shall hold an aggregate meeting of all its members at least once every quarter. One of these quarterly meetings shall be the A.G.M.
- 5. All branch members, paid up and registered at the end of the previous half year shall be entitled to attend and vote at the A.G.M.
- 6. The A.G.M. shall elect a Branch Executive comprising of a Chairperson, A Vice-Chairperson, secretary and treasurer, and 5 ordinary members elected under P.R. The Branch Executive shall conduct the routine organisation of Party affairs in the Constituency, subject to the over-riding authority of the Quarterly Branch Meeting, and the National Executive, which may remove any branch executive member who does not properly fulfill his/her function, subject to appeal to the Appeal Board and Annual Conference.
- 7. The Constituency Branch shall be entitled to draw up its own rules and Standing Orders provided these are approved by the National Executive, and do not conflict with the Party Constitution.

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Section 4: NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The National Executive Committee shall be elected by the Annual Conference, and shall comprise of the following membership:
 - (a) 6 Officers, President, Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary and Treasurer.
 - (b) 4 Ex-Officio, The Chairpersons of the Women's Committee, Young Socialists, Trade Union and Unemployed Workers Group, and Parliamentary Group.
 - (c) 11 Ordinary members elected under P.R. The N.E.C. shall be empowered to co-opt 2 additional members.
2. In the interval between the National Conference the control of the organisation and the administration of Party affairs shall be carried out by the N.E.C.
3. All members of the National Executive shall be members of the Party.
4. The National Executive shall meet at least 6 times every year.
5. The N.E.C. shall be entitled to appoint such committees, sub-committees and officials, paid and voluntary, as may be appropriate.
6. The Party Officers shall act as a Standing Committee to undertake the routine administration of Party affairs.
7. To promote full internal debate on the Party's tactics and strategy, the N.E.C. shall circulate a monthly internal bulletin for sale to members and open to all individual contributions.
8. Because of the failure of past solutions, the working class is both divided and confused. In order to open up a debate about methods, policies and programmes the N.E.C. shall publish a monthly journal accessible to all currents of opinion in the Party.

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Section 5: NATIONAL CONFERENCE

1. The ultimate control of the Party shall be exercised by the National Conference.
2. The National Conference shall meet annually at such time and place as shall be decided by the National Executive. It may be summoned to meet specially at any time by the decision of the National Executive. It may also be summoned to meet by petition signed by 10% of the registered paid up members.

3. Every Party member registered and paid up to the end of the previous half-year shall be entitled to attend, participate and vote at National Conference.
4. A Conference Organising Committee shall be elected by National Conference to organise all aspects of the subsequent conference. The Committee shall comprise the Party Officers, and 7 Ordinary members who are not also members of the N.E.C. and who are elected by P.R.
5. Each branch of the Party shall be entitled to submit 3 resolutions for consideration by Conference. Three resolutions may also be submitted by each associated group and by the N.E.C.
6. The 7 ordinary members elected under (4) above shall constitute the Steering Committee for the subsequent Conference and shall be responsible for receiving motions for Conference and the drafting of its order paper.

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Section 6: ASSOCIATED GROUPS

1. All members of the Party so eligible may belong to one or more of the following Associated Groups.
 - (a) Parliamentary Group
 - (b) Women's Committee
 - (c) Trade Union and Unemployed Workers Group
 - (d) Young Socialists.
2. Only members of the Party shall be entitled to be members of the Associated Groups.
3. Each group shall be entitled to draw up its own constitution, rules and standing orders, and to conduct its own affairs, but shall be subject in every respect to the over-riding authority of the N.E.C.
4. The National Women's Committee of the Party shall be an elected body of the women members of the Party, recallable by a simple majority at any national women's meeting.

Section 7: ELECTIONS

1. The National Executive shall decide what elections are to be contested by the Party subject to any decisions of the National Conference.
2. The National Executive shall convene a Selection Conference for the purpose of choosing Party candidates, and shall draw up appropriate standing orders.
3. For Selection Conferences, every Party member paid up and registered for at least 6 months prior to the Selection Conference shall be entitled to attend and vote, and to seek nomination as a candidate.

4. In the case of Local Elections, the National Executive shall determine the selection procedure where Ward boundaries do not coincide with constituency boundaries.
5. The National Executive shall prepare and publish an Election Manifesto, and such policy statements as may be appropriate. All such statements must be consistent with the Provisions of the Party Constitution, and with Party policy as laid down by National Conference.

Section 8: FINANCE

1. The National Executive shall have full authority to administer the financial affairs of the Party.
2. Proper books of account shall be maintained at all times, and financial accounts shall be prepared and submitted annually to National Conference.
3. The financial accounts shall be audited annually by an Auditor who shall be elected each year by National Conference.

Section 9: GENERAL

1. Three Trustees of the Party shall be elected each year by Annual Conference.
2. The National Executive subject ultimately to National Conference shall have the authority to decide any matter in which the interpretation or application of this Constitution is doubtful and to make provision for any matter on which the Constitution is silent.
3. The Constitution may be amended by a 3/5 majority vote at National Conference.

MEMBERSHIP FEE:

Members in employment: An initial fee of £5 which shall go into a special fighting fund to launch the Party; and thereafter a fee of 50p per week, to be divided 40p to the Party at national level, and 10p to the branch. For unemployed members, students, pensioners etc. 10p per week divided equally between the National Party and the Branch. Responsibility for collection of fees shall rest with the Branch. The £5 if necessary can be paid over a period of 3 months.

AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

SECTION 1

2.and shall SUPPORT AND be in the forefront of struggles etc.
.....political rights, UNEMPLOYMENT, WAGE RESTRAINT ETC.
15. Addreligion, SEX, sexual preference
(e) The liberalisation of sexual and family law
(f) Full equality for women in work and education and the right to control their fertility.
16. Delete -
It recognises the right of etc.

SECTION 2

add -

7. Political tendencies shall have the right to circulate their papers within the Party.

SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

c/o 30 Chelmsford Road,
Ranelagh,
Dublin 6

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I THE UNDERSIGNED WISH TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIALIST
LABOUR PARTY AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES
OF THE PARTY.

SIGNED/..... DATE/.....

NAME..... (BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

TELEPHONE.....

CONSTITUENCY.....

TRADE UNION (IF ANY).....

TENANT/COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION.....

MEMBERSHIP FEE

MEMBERS IN EMPLOYMENT: AN INITIAL FEE OF £5 (ONLY APPLIES TO
FIRST YEAR) WHICH SHALL GO INTO A SPECIAL FIGHTING FUND TO
LAUNCH THE PARTY; AND THEREAFTER A FEE OF 50p PER WEEK TO BE
DIVIDED - 40p TO THE PARTY AT NATIONAL LEVEL, AND 10p TO THE
BRANCH. THE £5 INITIAL PAYMENT IF NECESSARY CAN BE PAID OVER
A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS.

UNEMPLOYED MEMBERS, STUDENTS, PENSIONERS etc., - 10p PER WEEK,
TO BE DIVIDED EQUALLY BETWEEN THE NATIONAL PARTY AND THE
BRANCH. SUCH MEMBERS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO PAY THE £5 INITIAL
FEE.

Title: Socialist Labour Party Constitution

Organisation: Socialist Labour Party

Date: 1977

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