CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF

AMERICANS FOR DEMOCRATIC ACTION

Preamble

We, liberals and progressives dedicated to democratic principles and the rights of the individual under law, establish and adopt this Constitution for Americans for Democratic Action. We pledge ourselves to political action, in accordance with constitutional democratic principles, on local, state and national levels, and to the support of the progressive objectives of labor unions, of cooperatives and farm organizations, and of other economic organizations of the people. We are neither a third party movement nor a part of any political party. Our aim is to provide a medium and a program to unite the liberal and progressive forces of America to promote action for the general welfare locally and nationally.

ARTICLE I.

General

Section 1. This organization shall be known as Americans for Democratic Action.

Section 2. Americans for Democratic Action subscribes to the following principles:

(a) We dedicate ourselves, as an organization of progressives, to the achievement of freedom and economic security for all people everywhere, through education and political action.

(b) We believe that rising living standards and lasting peace can be attained by democratic planning, enlargement of fundamental liberties and international cooperation.
(Article I)

Section 2. (cont’d)

(c) We believe that Communism, like all forms of totalitarianism, is incompatible with these objectives. In our crusade for an expanding democracy and against Fascism and reaction, we, therefore, welcome as members of ADA only those whose devotion to the principles of political freedom is unqualified.

Section 3. This Constitution shall remain in effect only until the first National Convention has met and adopted a new revised Constitution.

ARTICLE II.

Membership

Section 1. Any person of any race, religion, color or sex who accepts in good faith the basic principles of Americans for Democratic Action may be a member of the organization.

Section 2. No person who is a member or follower of any totalitarian organization or who subscribes to totalitarian political beliefs may be a member of Americans for Democratic Action.

Section 3. Local chapters are empowered, in accordance with Article VII, Sections 5 and 6, to decide any question respecting individual qualifications for membership in such chapters.

Section 4. All members shall be members of the National Organization, functioning through local chapters where they exist. Membership-at-large will be permitted only in areas where there are no local chapters, or in exceptional cases.

Section 5. The National Board may confer honorary membership upon any person who has rendered meritorious service to Americans for Democratic Action or to its principles or purposes.

Section 6. No officer or member of Americans for Democratic Action who is an employee of the Government of the United States shall participate in decisions or activities related to political management or political campaigns so long as and to the extent that, such participation is prohibited by law. (more)
and to the extent that, such participation is prohibited by law.

ARTICLE III.

National Convention

Section 1. There shall be an annual National Convention of Americans for Democratic Action which shall determine the policies of the organization for the following year. The first such National Convention shall be called by the National Board as early as possible but not later than one year from the date of adoption of this Constitution.

Section 2. The basis for representation at the first National Convention shall be determined by the National Board consistent with the principle of providing the fullest possible participation of all local chapters in such National Convention. The basis for representation at all subsequent National Conventions shall be written into the new revised Constitution to be adopted at the first National Convention.

ARTICLE IV.

Officers, National Board, Executive Committee

Section 1. The officers of the organization shall be a Chairman of the National Board (to be known as the National Chairman), a Chairman of the Executive Committee, and a Treasurer, who shall be elected by the National Convention and hold office until the succeeding National Convention. The Organizing Conference for Americans for Democratic Action, March 29 and 30, 1947, shall elect officers to hold these three offices until the first National Convention. In addition, the National Board may name one or more Vice Chairmen and such other officers from among its members as its deems advisable.

Section 2. There shall be a National Board which shall be the governing body of this organization, subject to the policies established by the National Con-
(Article IV)
(Section 2)(cont'd)

vention, and to this Constitution. The National Board shall be composed of the
three officers indicated in Section 1, twenty-five members-at-large, two mem-
bers from the Student Division (see Article VIII, Section 3), and one member
from each Chapter having a minimum membership of one hundred, provided that
there shall be no more than two Board members representing Chapters from any
one state.

Section 3. The members-at-large of the National Board shall be elected by the
National Convention and hold office until the succeeding National Convention.
The Organizing Conference for Americans for Democratic Action, March 29 and 30,
1947, shall elect the members-at-large to hold office until the first National
Convention.

Section 4. Members of the National Board representing Chapters shall be elected
by their respective Chapters to serve for one year. Where state charters are
granted (see Article VII, Section 2), the State Organization shall be entitled
to elect two members to the National Board. Where no state charter has been
granted and there are more than two Chapters in the state entitled to members
on the National Board, the two largest Chapters thirty days prior to the National
Convention shall be entitled to the representation.

Section 5. The National Board shall have the power and authority during the
period prior to the first National Convention to designate additional members
of the Board not to exceed ten in number to serve until such Convention. Such
designees shall exercise all rights, privileges and duties of other Board mem-

Section 6. The National Board shall meet quarterly. The National Board shall
also meet at the call of the National Chairman or by petition of any ten members
of the Board.
(Article IV) (cont'd)

Section 7. The National Board shall have power and authority to designate successors where a vacancy occurs in any office or among the members-at-large of the Board by virtue of death, resignation or otherwise. Such designee shall serve until the next succeeding election and exercise all rights, privileges and duties of the officer or Board member whom he succeeds.

Section 8. The National Board shall elect from its own membership an Executive Committee which shall act on behalf of the Board between meetings. The Executive Committee shall consist of a minimum of 12 members and the National office. A minimum of one-third of the Executive Committee members shall be chosen among Board members elected by the several Chapters.

Section 9. The National Board and the Executive Committee shall adopt their own rules of procedure.

ARTICLE V.

Headquarters and Staff

Section 1. The National Headquarters of Americans for Democratic Action shall be at Washington, D.C.

Section 2. The Board shall hire and discharge and fix the compensation of the principal employees of Americans for Democratic Action, and shall delegate authority to hire and discharge subordinate employees to the Executive Committee or appropriate staff executives as the Board shall determine proper.

ARTICLE VI.

Finances

Section 1. Minimum dues for membership shall be three dollars ($3.00) a year.

Section 2. Contributing memberships may be established at higher rates but such memberships shall not confer additional privileges.

Section 3. Additional financial contributions may be solicited from members and others.
Section 4. Payments by the Chapters to the National Organization shall be made in accordance with Article VII, Section 3.

Section 5. The funds of the organization deposited in banks shall be drawn upon only by checks signed by two persons designated by the Board, only one of whom may be a member of the staff.

Section 6. The Board shall provide for an annual audit of the books of the organization by a certified public accountant, and for such interim audits as it may deem desirable.

ARTICLE VII.

Chapters

Section 1. Local charters shall be granted by the National Board or the Executive Committee when satisfactory evidence is presented to it that the group seeking the charter accepts in good faith the basic principles of Americans for Democratic Action and is prepared to organize an ADA Chapter which will strive to become the leader of liberal and progressive thought and action in the community on both local and national issues.

Section 2. State charters may be granted by the National Board or the Executive Committee where the situation in the particular state warrants such a charter. After the granting of the state charter, local charters in that state shall continue to be granted by the National Board and the Executive Committee, but only with the advice and consent of the state organization.

Section 3. Every Chapter shall pay to the National Organization one-third of all income from memberships and contributions, except where there is special arrangement with the National Organization. Such payment shall be made quarterly on or before February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1, and must be accompanied by a financial report from the Chapter. Failure to meet these obligations within sixty (60) days of the dates indicated shall constitute cause for revocation of the charter.

(more)
Section 4. The National Organization shall supply to all members all regular publications of the Organization, either directly or through the local Chapter, and shall supply to all Chapters such services as may be feasible and advisable.

Section 5. All Chapters shall elect their own officers and conduct their own activities in accordance with democratic procedures, and shall support the aims, policies and objectives of the National Organization. All chapters shall have power to pass upon the qualifications of persons for membership therein, under Article II hereof. All Chapters shall file copies of their constitutions with the National Board.

Section 6. Local chapters shall have power to suspend or expel any person who does not meet the qualifications for membership set forth in Article II hereof. Any action which may lead to the suspension or expulsion of any member shall meet the requirements of democratic procedure and afford full opportunity, at his request, to appear, present evidence and refute accusations.

ARTICLE VIII

Student Division

Section 1. There shall be a Student Division of Americans for Democratic Action, to be known as Students for Democratic Action.

Section 2. Students for Democratic Action shall establish their own by-laws with the approval of the National Board or the Executive Committee and shall charter student chapters in accordance with such by-laws.

Section 3. Students for Democratic Action shall elect two members of the National Board (see Article IV, Section 2) to serve for one year.

ARTICLE IX

Suspension and Revocation of Charter

The National Board or Executive Committee is empowered to suspend the charter of any Chapter upon a determination that the Chapter has failed to carry out its
obligations under the Constitution and to revoke the charter of the Chapter if it so determines after notice and formal hearing.

ARTICLE X.

Amendments

The National Board shall have the power during the period prior to the first National Convention to amend this Constitution by a two-thirds vote of its membership.
GENERAL PURPOSES

As Americans for Democratic Action we stand for a liberalism that moves with the times.

We hold, with the Declaration of Independence, that the purpose of government is to secure to men the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We fight today in the spirit of those who, through the course of American history, have fought to vindicate these rights against whatever force threatened them. We act in the name of the American liberal tradition, in the spirit of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln, of the Grangers, the Populists, the Bull Moosers, the Wisconsin Progressives, the New Freedom and the New Deal; we inherit their fighting faith in the capabilities of free men which has animated our greatest leaders and our noblest political movements. Our objective is to show that American progressivism is not dead: that it is the only standard under which the United States can rally the free peoples of the world against totalitarianism, of the right or of the left.

We believe that where men are faced with hunger, with homelessness, with all the cruel whims of an impersonal business cycle, and, above all, with fear of atomic war, political freedom may all too easily be compromised and deformed. Demagogues will step in and offer security in exchange for a liberty that has lost its meaning. Millions throughout the world have bartered away freedom in the hope of bread. Other millions have never achieved freedom because they lacked bread to begin with. It is our conviction that bread and freedom are interdependent, and our purpose to work tirelessly to preserve and increase both.

Our program is directed toward this one goal: a society in which each
individual enjoys the highest degree of personal liberty compatible with the liberty and economic security of his fellows.

By liberty we mean the literal assurance of our traditional American rights, based on a profound belief in the dignity of the individual: equality before the law and freedom for all persons to speak, to write, to worship and to vote as they choose, without regard to race, creed, color, or economic status.

By economic security we mean freedom from want and an equitable distribution of the fruits of labor. More concretely we mean the guarantee of full and steady production and full and steady employment; the protection of labor's right to organize democratically and bargain collectively; the security of the farmer in his farm and his production; the protection of the people's inheritance in natural resources against waste and depreciation; and a system of minimum wages and social insurance broad enough to maintain adequate standards of nutrition, education, medical care, and housing, below which no one would be permitted to fall.

We recognize that if these aims are to be attained there must be drastic regulation, dispersal, and, in some cases, public acquisition, of monopolies, those aggregations of private power which now exercise so large a measure of control over the public welfare and the political life of the nation.

At the same time we believe that democratic control of economic life means not only the basic direction of economic currents through the national government, but also public participation in economic effort at all levels. We are opposed to the overcentralization of controls and to attempts to assert government supervision over the details of economic life. Between the all-powerful state, however, and the anarchy of rampant "private enterprise" is the wide and fruitful field of independent public authorities, municipal ownership, cooperatives, federally initiated projects locally administered, and all the possible (more)
General Purposes
3-16-47 page 8

Combinations of these democratic devices. This is an area we mean to explore to the full.

Liberalism is a demanding faith. It rests neither on a set of dogmas nor on a blueprint, but is rather a spirit which each generation of liberals must learn to apply to the needs of its own time. The spirit itself is unchanging — a deep belief in the dignity of man, a faith in human reason and the power of free inquiry, a high sense of individual responsibility for oneself and one's neighbor, a conviction that the best society is the one that enables the greatest number of its members to develop their potentialities to the utmost.

Opposed to this spirit are the wealth and power of the organized forces of reaction and the masked efforts of the advocates of Communism. To defeat them, those who believe in this spirit must devote their energies to the creation of an organization of their own, and must work through it.

Americans for Democratic Action is an organization for those who have not abandoned hope. We desire to mobilize the limitless energies of our democratic tradition against the blind folly of conservatism, the terror of the police state, and the hopeless destruction of an atomic war. The triumph of American liberalism in our own day will mean a society in which the resources of the human soul, freed for the ends of peace, will provide individual freedom and economic abundance on a scale higher than the world has ever thought possible.

It is to this triumph that Americans for Democratic Action devotes itself.

-ADA-