



Congress of the People

The 2006 Constitution

Whereas the citizens of our Republic of Trinidad & Tobago:

- a) Subscribe to the enduring political values of equality, truth, freedom and justice and to the eradication, as far as possible, of politics based on race, class and religious discrimination;
- b) Desire to promote integrity in public life geared to reduce and eliminate all forms of discrimination and exploitation and to condemn immorality and corrupt practices.
- c) Believe that the functioning of the economic and social system should redound to the benefit of the citizens of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago so as to contribute to the equal and equitable distribution of the rewards of our country rather than remain in the repository of a few;
- d) Assert their beliefs in the ideals of a democratic society where all citizens will be empowered to participate in the affairs relating to national welfare;
- e) Recognize that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for morality, spiritually and for the rule of law;
- f) Desire that the Congress should enshrine and embody the principles and values stated herein and implement measures geared to promote effective consultation that will result in regular, open and fair dialogue among its membership.

Now therefore, the following provisions shall have effect as the Constitution of the COP.



CHAPTER ONE

Name, Symbol, Fundamental Principles and Objectives

Article 1 - Name, Motto and Symbol

- 1.1 The name of the party shall be the **Congress of the People** herein after referred to as "The C.O.P".
- 1.2 The Motto of The C.O.P shall be, "One Nation, One People"
- 1.3 There shall be a C.O.P Symbol, Flag, and Theme Song as may be prescribed under the C.O.P Regulations.

Article 2 - Principles and Objectives

The principles and objectives of the C.O.P shall be to uphold:

- 2.1 (a) The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.
- (b) The Rule of Law and the fundamental rights of the individual within a framework of economic and social justice.
- (c) Religious freedom.
- (d) A system of democratic political participation free from victimization and sensitive to our multi-cultural society.
- 2.2 To encourage, promote and foster national unity, patriotism and social cohesion.
- 2.3 To promote the economic, social, moral, spiritual, cultural and educational development of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.
- 2.4 To promote peace, order and caring governance
- 2.5 To promote economic, cultural and political association or relations with the Caribbean Community and in the international community.
- 2.6 To provide opportunities for members and supporters of the Party to contribute effectively to community service and to all aspects of our multicultural life.
- 2.7 To promote and undertake other activities which in the opinion of the C.O.P are conducive to the attainment of the principles and objectives of the C.O.P and do such things as are incidental to the attainment of the above objectives

CHAPTER TWO

Membership

Article 3 - Membership

3.1 There shall be five types of membership:-

- (a) Founding
- (b) Individual - Adult and Youth
- (c) Affiliated Group
- (d) Honorary
- (e) Overseas

3.2 Founding

- (a) Founding members shall be individuals who joined the C.O.P on or before 30th April 2008.
- (b) The Founding member must satisfy the criteria established under Article 3.3 and Article 4.1 as may be relevant.

3.3 Individual-Adult

Any person who is eligible to vote at a National Election in Trinidad and Tobago is eligible for membership in the C.O.P if he;

- (a) Accepts the aims, object, principles, policies and programmes of the C.O.P and pledges himself to work for the achievement thereof.
- (b) Agrees to abide by the Constitution of the C.O.P its Code of Ethics and decisions.
- (c) Is not a member of any other political party or of any organization the aims, objects, principles, policies and programmes which are contrary to or inconsistent with those of the C.O.P.

3.4 Individual - Youth

Any person having attained the age of thirteen (13) years and not yet attained the age of thirty-five (35) and who under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago will be entitled on attaining the age of eighteen (18) years to vote in any National Elections will be eligible for youth membership if he;

- (a) Accepts the aims, objects, principles, policies and programmes of the C.O.P.
- (b) Agrees to abide by the Constitution of the C.O.P and to its discipline and decisions.
- (c) Is not a member of any other political party or of any organization the aims, objects, principles, policies and programmes which are contrary to or inconsistent with those of the C.O.P.

3.5 Affiliated Groups

Any organization shall be eligible for group membership provided that such organization;

- (a) Accepts the constitution, aims, objects, policies and programmes of the C.O.P.
- (b) Is not affiliated to any other political party, or to any organization the aims, objects, principles, policies and programmes which are contrary to or inconsistent with those of the C.O.P.

3.6 Honorary

- (a) Honorary membership shall be conferred by the National Executive and confirmed by the National Council on persons who have made outstanding contributions to the political development of the Country, Region and/or the C.O.P.
- (b) A person on whom honorary membership is conferred may be invited to attend, with observer status, National and Special Assembly Conferences.

3.7 Overseas

Persons residing abroad are eligible for membership in the C.O.P in the discretion of the National Executive, and if accepted and financial will be entitled to exercise voting rights at any meeting of the National Assembly if present in Trinidad and Tobago.

Article 4 - Affiliation and Admission to Membership

- (a) Applications for membership shall be made on the prescribed form and forwarded to the Secretary - Membership and Mobilization and accompanied by the application fee.
- (b) The National Council shall make regulations governing the procedure for admission to membership, including application fee and such other levies as may be necessary from time to time.
- (c) On admission each member shall receive a membership card and a copy of the C.O.P Constitution.
- (d) Each member other than Honorary members and members over the age of sixty-five (65) years shall pay an annual membership fee as prescribed by the National Council.
- (e) The National Executive shall ensure that a proper and accurate register of all the members of the C.O.P, and which has been completed from the records kept and submitted by the Constituency Circles, be kept by the Secretariat under the control of the assigned Deputy Leader:

- (i) The registration shall be kept in sequential order by reference to constituency, dates and membership number.
- (ii) A separate register shall be kept for Founding Members, recorded in alphabetical order, constituency and membership number.
- (iii) All membership registers shall be kept securely in the safe custody of the C.O.P Secretariat and under the control the assigned Deputy Leader.

CHAPTER THREE

Structure and Responsibility

Article 5 - Structure of the C.O.P

The C.O.P shall be organized as follows;

- (a) Community Circles
- (b) Constituency Councils
- (c) Youth Congress
- (d) Women's Forum
- (e) Parliamentary Caucus
- (f) Local Government Caucus
- (g) National Executive
- (h) National Council
- (i) National Assembly
- (j) Special National Assembly

Article 6 - Community Circles

- 6.1 The Community Circle shall be the base unit of the C.O.P. It shall be established within each Constituency in Trinidad and Tobago and shall not be more than ten (10) in any constituency, provided however that if a higher number is necessary this can be requested from the National Council.

- 6.2 A Community Circle shall comprise members of the C.O.P ordinarily resident in a geographical area reflecting a community of interests and having a development focus in relation to the social and economic needs, and comprising Polling Divisions which exists therein.
- 6.3 Each Community Circle shall have no fewer than twenty (20) members.
- 6.4 The Community Circle shall be responsible for:
- (a) Recruitment of members
 - (b) Organizing community projects and providing community services and leadership for residents of the area within which it operates.
 - (c) Identifying community problems and working toward their solutions.
 - (d) Undertaking electoral registration of residents of the area within which it operates.
 - (e) Generally promoting the objectives, philosophy and public image of the C.O.P.
- 6.5 The Community Circle shall report quarterly to the relevant Constituency Council.
- 6.6 Community Circles shall, annually at a Circle Conference elect the following officers:
- (a) Chairman
 - (b) Deputy Chairman
 - (c) Secretary
 - (d) Assistant Secretary
 - (e) Community Services Officer
- 6.7 The Election of Officers shall be held under the supervision of the Constituency Council. All financial members of the Community Circles shall be entitled to attend, vote and stand for office.
- 6.8 Each Community Circle shall meet at least once per month and the quorum of such meetings shall be twelve (12) of which two (2) shall be officers.

Article 7 - Constituency Council

- 7.1 The Constituency Council shall be the governing unit of a Constituency as defined by the Elections and Boundaries Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. It shall comprise the following officers and representatives:
- (a) Chairman
 - (b) Deputy Chairman
 - (c) Secretary
 - (d) Treasurer
 - (e) Assistant Secretary
 - (f) Field Operations Officer
 - (g) Elections Officer

- (h) Education and Research Officer
 - (i) The Parliamentary Representative of the Constituency or person nominated by the National Executive to perform that function,
 - (j) Local Government Representatives, if any, resident in the constituency
 - (k) The Chairman and Secretary of each Community Circle or their alternates appointed by the community circle.
 - (l) The Chairman of the Constituency Youth Congress
 - (m) The Chairperson of the Constituency Women's Forum
- 7.2 The Officers referred to above shall be elected annually at a constituency conference.
- 7.3 All financial members of the constituency in accordance with lists submitted by the Community Circles and approved by the Secretary - Membership and Mobilization shall be entitled to attend, vote and stand for office provided they are members for at least six months.
- 7.4 The Constituency Council shall be responsible for.
- (a) The implementation of the aims, objects, policies and programmes of the C.O.P
 - (b) Carrying out continuous political education in the Constituency
 - (c) Establishing and supervising the Community Circles within the constituency
 - (d) Recommending candidates for Parliamentary and Local Government Elections and taking all steps to ensure the election of the approved candidates
 - (e) Liaising with the Constituency Youth Congress
 - (f) Liaising with the coordinating Constituency Council for Women
 - (g) Establishing and maintaining an up-to-date register of all members of the C.O.P resident in the constituency
 - (h) Convening Statutory and Special Conferences of the constituency
- 7.5 The Constituency shall be represented on the National Council by its Chairman and Secretary or their alternates.
- 7.6 The Constituency Council shall meet quarterly and a quorum shall be not less than two-thirds of its membership
- 7.7 The Constituency Council shall submit annual written reports of its activities to the National Council

Article 8 - Constituency Conference and Special Conferences

- 8.1 There shall be a Constituency Conference annually and Special Conferences as required. The quorum for such conferences shall be at least two-thirds of the membership of the constituency or one hundred financial members which ever is the smaller number provided however that if more than twenty-five are present, they can constitute a quorum.
- 8.2 All C.O.P members resident in the Constituency shall be entitled to attend, vote and hold office as noted in Article.
- 8.3 The Annual Statutory Constituency Conference shall be convened in accordance with a predetermined scheduled of dates approve by the National Executive
- 8.4 The Annual Statutory Constituency Conference shall:
- (a) Consider written reports from the Constituency Council
 - (b) Review the performance of the C.O.P within the Constituency
 - (c) Consider and approve resolutions to be forwarded to the National Council
 - (d) Elect officers as required in Article 7.1 for a two year term.
- 8.5 Special Constituency Conferences may be summoned by the National Council to consider matters placed before it by the said National Council or on written request of at least three Community Circles stating the specific reasons for the request.

Article 9 - Youth Congress

- 9.1 There shall be an Organization for Youth Development hereinafter referred to as the Youth Congress
It shall consist of all members between the ages of thirteen (13) and thirty-five (35) and shall pursue activities designed to educate its members and to develop moral codes of conduct and self-esteem
- 9.2 Constituency Youth
The Constituency Youth Congress shall establish youth clubs in each constituency which shall consist of all members in the constituency within the age qualification.
- 9.3 The Constituency Youth Congress hereinafter referred as the CYC shall comprise:
- (a) The Officers of the CYC
 - (b) All Youths resident in the Constituency
- 9.4 The Constituency Youth Congress shall elect the following officers and delegates:

- (a) Chairman
- (b) Deputy Chairman
- (c) Secretary
- (d) Treasurer
- (e) Assistant Secretary
- (f) Education and Research Officer
- (g) Sports, Culture and Youth Development Officer
- (h) Delegates to the Youth Congress Conference

9.5 The CYC shall be responsible for:

- (a) Educational projects to improve the knowledge and self esteem of its members
- (b) Sporting and cultural activities to encourage talent identification and development
- (c) Implementation of programs formulated by the National Youth Council
- (d) Projecting a proper image of the C.O.P and promoting its principles and philosophy
- (e) Recruitment of members
- (f) Such other activities it considers necessary to further its objectives

9.6 National Youth Council

There shall be a National Youth Council hereinafter referred to as the NYC, which shall be the governing unit between Statutory Conferences. It shall comprise:

- (a) The officers of the Youth Congress
- (b) The Chairman and Secretary of each Constituency Youth Congress

9.7 The NYC shall:

- (a) Formulate the programs of the Youth Congress
- (b) Establish statutory and ad hoc committees as required
- (c) Consider written reports from each CYC submitted to it and take such action as may be necessary.
- (d) Make quarterly reports to the National Council of the C.O.P

9.8 The NYC shall have overall responsibility for the efficient functioning of the Youth Congress and CYC and shall meet once monthly. The quorum shall be one-third of its membership which must include the Chairman and Secretary of the Youth Congress or their alternates.

9.9 The Officers of the Youth Congress shall be:

- (a) Chairman
- (b) Vice Chairman
- (c) General Secretary
- (d) Treasurer

- (e) Assistant General Secretary
 - (f) Education and Research Officer
 - (g) Sports, Culture and Youth Development Officer
- 9.10 The Youth Congress shall be represented on units of the C.O.P as follows:
- (a) National Council - Chairman, Secretary and ten other Delegates elected by the NYC
 - (b) Statutory and Special National Assembly Conferences -all officers and five other delegates elected by the NYC.
 - (c) Parliamentary and Local Government Caucuses with the status of a trainee
- 9.11 The conference of the Youth Congress shall be convened annually and shall comprise the following:
- (a) The officers as listed in 9.9 above
 - (b) Ten financial members of each CYC elected by the said CYC, in addition to its officers.
 - (c) Such other persons with observer status as the NYC may approve
- 9.12 The Statutory Conference of the Youth Congress shall:
- (a) Consider written reports of the NYC
 - (b) Approve resolutions submitted by the NYC
 - (c) Elect officers of the Youth Congress and other representatives for a three year term as follows:
 - (i) Ten delegates in addition to the Chairman and the Secretary of the Youth Congress to serve on the National Council of the C.O.P
 - (ii) Five delegates in addition to the officers of the Youth Congress to the Statutory and Special National Assembly Conferences of the C.O.P
- 9.13 The quorum for the Statutory Conference of the Youth Congress shall consist of not less than One Hundred members entitled to attend and vote.

Article 10 - Women's Forum

- 10:1 There shall be an Organization for Women members of the C.O.P hereinafter referred to as the Forum. It shall consist of all women members who desire to pursue activities for their personal development and special interest separate from any other Unit.
- 10:2 The Forum shall subscribe to and promote the principles and objectives of the C.O.P as defined in Article 2.
- 10:3 Women members of the C.O.P shall not be debarred from participating in any other unit of the C.O.P on the basis that they are members of the Forum.

- 10:4 The Forum shall consist of three units namely:
- (a) Community Circles in each Constituency.
 - (b) Co-ordinating Constituency Councils.
 - (c) A National Women's Assembly.
- 10:5 The Forum shall establish not more than Five Community Circles in each Constituency which shall consist of all members resident in the Circle, who desire to become members.
- 10:6 The Women's Community Circle herein after referred to as the W.C.C. shall elect the following annually at a W.C.C. conference:
- (a) Chairperson.
 - (b) Deputy Chairperson.
 - (c) Secretary
 - (d) Assistant Secretary / Treasurer
 - (e) Education & Research Officer
 - (f) Community Services Officer
 - (g) Delegates to the National Women Assembly and Coordinating Constituency Council
- 10:7 The W.C.C. shall be responsible for:
- (a) Promoting the aims, objects, philosophy and public image of the C.O.P.
 - (b) Identifying community problems related to women and working towards their solution.
 - (c) Developing programs for the personal development of women, their well being and security.
- 10:8 There shall be a Co-ordinating Constituency Council in each Constituency as defined by the Election and Boundaries Commission which shall have responsibility for;
- (a) Formulating the programs of the Forum.
 - (b) Considering reports from and guiding the W.C.C.
 - (c) The efficient functioning of the Forum and shall meet at least quarterly. The quorum shall be two thirds of its membership or fifty (50) members whichever is the lesser.
 - (d) Establishing Standing Committees as necessary to effectively discharge its responsibilities and agreeing on the Terms of Reference of such committees.
 - (e) Recommending to the National Executive Candidates for Parliamentary and Local Government Elections and taking steps to ensure the election of the approved candidates.
- 10:9 The C.C.C. shall comprise:
- (a) The Chairperson and Secretary of each W.C.C. in the Constituency or their alternates.
 - (b) Three delegates from each W.C.C. elected as in 10:6

- 10:10 (a) There shall be a National Women's Assembly hereinafter referred to as the N.W.A. which shall convened annually in accordance with a schedule of conference dates issued by the National Executive of the C.O.P. The quorum for the N.W.A. shall be at least one hundred (100) members.
- (b) The N.W.A. shall comprise of the following:
- i) The Officers of the Forum as listed in Article 10.11 elected for a (3) three year term
 - ii) The Officers of all C.C.C.
 - iii) Twenty (20) delegates from each C.C.C. elected as in
 - iv) Such other person with observes status as the officers may decide.
- 10:11 The Officers of the Forum shall be:
- (a) Chairperson
 - (b) Deputy Chairperson
 - (c) General Secretary
 - (d) Treasurer
 - (e) Assistant General Secretary
 - (f) Education and Research Officer
 - (g) Communications and Public Relations Officer
 - (h) Public Relations Officer

Article 11 - Parliamentary Caucus

- 11:1 The Parliamentary Caucus shall comprise all members of the C.O.P who are members of either House of Parliament, or persons appointed by the Political Leader as members of the Caucus.
- 11:2 The Political Leader shall appoint a member of the Parliamentary Caucus to chair the Caucus.
- 11:3 The Parliamentary Caucus shall make regulations for the conduct of its business and shall include in its membership a member of the Youth Congress as a trainee.
- 11.4 Where the C.O.P has no representation in the Parliament, candidates who contested the last General Election will be invited by the Political Leader to form an Extra-Parliamentary Caucus and shall function as if they were elected/nominated members.

Article 12-Local Government Caucus

- 12:1 The Local Government Caucus shall comprise all the members of the C.O.P who are members of Local Government Authorities and such other members appointed by the Political Leader.

- 12.2 The Local Government Caucus shall make regulations for the conduct of its business and shall include in its membership a member of the Youth Congress as a trainee.
- 12:3 Where the C.O.P has no representative in a Local Government Authority, candidates who contested the last Local Government Elections shall be invited by the Leader to:-
- (a) Sit with those who have been elected and be part of the Local Government Caucus.
 - (b) Constitute an extra-Local Government Caucus and shall function as if they were elected. The Political Leader shall name the chairman of the Caucus.

Article 13- National Executive

- 13:1 There shall be a National Executive responsible to the National Council for the general administration of the C.O.P.
- 13:2 The National Executive shall have the following specific authority:
- (a) Ratify application for membership as recommended by the Secretary - Membership and Mobilization.
 - (b) Supervise Constituency Councils, Youth Congress and Women's Forum.
 - (c) Establish and operate a Secretariat for the effective administration of the C.O.P, including the employment of a General Secretary and or Chief Executive Officer and determine their job specifications.
 - (d) Investigate all matters of infringement of the Constitution and conflicts between units of the C.O.P and if necessary refer same to the Conflict Resolution Committee for determination and report,
 - (e) Establish through the Secretary Education and Research a mentorship program for the Youth Congress
 - (f) Consider reports from Committees appointed under Article 13.5 and take appropriate action
 - (g) Consider all matters referred to it by the National Council and take appropriate action.
- 13.3 The National Executive shall comprise the Officers of the C.O.P and other Representatives as follows:
- (a) Political Leader
 - (b) Four Deputy Political Leaders, one of whom shall be a resident of Tobago

- (c) Chairman
- (d) Deputy Chairman
- (e) Secretary - Finance
- (f) Secretary - Field Operation,
- (g) Secretary - Education and Research
- (h) Secretary - Communications
- (i) Secretary - Public Relations
- (j) Secretary - Elections and Voter Registration
- (k) Secretary - Membership and Mobilization
- (l) The Chairman of the Youth Congress
- (m) The Chairperson of the Women's Congress
- (n) Two members of each designated regional organization comprising constituencies in Trinidad as determined by the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) from time to time.
The National Executive as provided in Article 30 shall approve regulations determining the number of such regional organization, the constituencies assigned to each region and the roles and functions of the regional representatives.
- (o) The Chairman of the Tobago Congress

13:4 The National Executive shall meet on the first Monday of every month at a time agreed upon by the Political Leader and Chairman. The quorum shall be not less than two-thirds $\frac{2}{3}$ of the membership including at least six (6) elected Officers.

13:5 The National Executive shall appoint the following Committees every three years and determine their Terms of Reference:

- (a) Strategy.
- (b) Conflict Resolution
- (c) Screening.
- (d) Administration
- (e) Finance
- (f) Such other Committees as it may deem necessary to assist Officers in the efficient performance of their duties

Article 14 - National Council

14:1 The National Council shall be the governing unit of the C.O.P between Statutory National Assembly Conferences and shall be responsible for the implementation of the fundamental principles, aims and objectives and formulation of policies and programs of the C.O.P and for ensuring adherence to the C.O.P Constitution and Code of Ethics.

- 14:2 The National Council shall comprise:
- (a) All members of the National Executive as listed in Article 13:3
 - (b) All members of the Parliamentary and Local Government, caucuses.
 - (c) Ten members of the Youth Congress in addition to the Chairman.
 - (d) Ten (10) members of the Women's Forum in addition to the Chairperson
 - (e) The Chairman and Secretary of each Constituency Council elected by the said Council.
 - (f) The Chairman and Secretary of the Tobago Congress
- 14:3 The National Council shall meet quarterly or as otherwise determined by the Political Leader in consultation with the C.O.P Chairman to receive reports from:
- (a) National Executive
 - (b) The Parliamentary Caucus.
 - (c) The Local Government Caucus.
 - (d) The National Youth Congress
 - (e) The Women's Forum
 - (f) The Tobago Congress
- 14:4 The quorum for meetings shall be two thirds of the membership of which six (6) shall be elected Officers.
- 14:5 The National Council may establish Standing Committees, prescribe matters and make and enforce Rules, Regulations and Standing Orders.
- 14:6 The National Council shall summon and make arrangements for Statutory National Assembly and Special Assembly Conferences.
- 14:7 The National Council shall report through the appropriate Deputy Leader to the Statutory National Assembly Conference on the functions of the C.O.P during the preceding term.
- 14:8 The National Council shall, on its own motion have the right to summon Special Assembly Conferences and determine their agenda.

Article 15 - Annual National and Special National Assembly Conferences

- 15.1 The National Assembly shall be convened annually by the authority of the National Council.
- 15.2 National Special Assemblies shall be summoned from time to time by the National Council as noted in Article 14.8

- 15.3 The Statutory and Special National Assembly Conferences shall comprise the following:-
- (a) All Members of the National Council
 - (b) All Members of the Parliamentary Caucus
 - (c) All Members of the Local Government Caucus
 - (d) Twenty-five (25) Members of each constituency council in addition to Members on the National Council.
 - (e) Five (5) Members of the Youth Congress in addition to Members of the National Council
 - (f) Five (5) Members the Women's Forum in addition to Members on the National Council
 - (g) Two (2) delegates representing each Affiliated Group
 - (h) Honorary Members
 - (i) Visiting Overseas Members
 - (j) Twenty-five (25) Members of the Tobago Congress in addition to its membership on the National Council.
- 15.4 The National Assembly shall be the supreme authority of the C.O.P and shall at its Statutory Conference:-
- (a) Receive and consider reports from:
 - i) The National Council
 - ii) The Parliamentary Caucus
 - iii) The Local Government Caucus
 - iv) The Youth Congress
 - v) The Women's Forum
 - vi) Tobago Congress
 - vii) The Secretary - Finance, on the Audited Statement of Accounts of the C.O.P
 - (b) Consider and adopt resolutions recommended by the National Council
 - (c) Discuss any other business as the National Council may decide

CHAPTER FOUR

Election, Resignation and Removal of Officers

Article 16 - Election of National Officers

- 16.1 The Political Leader shall be elected for a term of three (3) years, provided however if a General Election falls during the term of office, he shall continue in office for the next Parliamentary term and until the next Annual National Assembly Conference at which officers are to be elected except as provided in Article 17.1

- 16.2 The Deputy Political Leaders shall be appointed by the Political Leader in consultation with other officers in his sole discretion and he shall assign their duties. One of the Deputy Leaders shall be a resident in Tobago and his appointment shall be made after consultation with Tobago members. They shall hold office at the Leader's discretion.
- 16.3 All other officers shall be elected for a term of two (2) years.
- 16.4 All officers as stated in Article 13.3, except Deputy Leaders, shall be elected on the basis of one man – one vote in accordance with a schedule of meetings prepared by the Secretariat and held in each constituency.
The Secretariat shall certify, twenty-one days before the date appointed by the National Council for elections, a list of financial members who shall be eligible to attend and vote.
- 16.5 (a) The General Secretary shall give notice to all Constituency Councils, Womens' Forum, Youth Congress, Affiliated Groups and the Tobago Congress to submit nominations for the election of officers on a prescribed form. Only nominations submitted by the above units shall be considered valid. Nominations must be submitted within fourteen (14) days of the date of notice and nominees must sign indicating their acceptance of nomination to the office for which they are nominated.
- (b) Upon receipt of the nominations, the General Secretary shall collate the responses and submit them to the elections committee.
- (c) Any person nominated for office may withdraw his nomination in writing at least five (5) days before the date of the elections.
- (d) The General Secretary shall submit a final list of elected officers to the Chairman of the Elections Committee, three (3) days before the date of the National Assembly.
- 16.6 Any National officer can have his office declared vacant for non-performance of his assigned duties on a recall petition signed by two-thirds of our Constituency Councils. Such officer shall have the right to contest the elections when the vacancy is being filled.
- 16.7 The National Council shall appoint an Elections Committee of five (5) members from among Honorary and Founding members to conduct the elections and the committee shall approve the voters' list submitted by the Secretariat.

Article 17 - Resignation, Replacement and Removal of Officers

17.1 Where the office of Political Leader is vacated for any reason other than the end of the term of office, the National Council shall summon the Special Conference of | the National Assembly within ninety (90) days of the date of the said office being vacated for the election of a Political Leader.

In the interim the National Council shall appoint one of the Deputy Leaders to act as Political Leader.

17.2 If in pursuance of Article 17.1 above a new Political Leader is elected, he shall have the right to nominate his Deputies in accordance with Article 16.2

17.3 Where a vacancy occurs in an office of a National Officer for any reason, the National Council shall appoint a replacement within thirty (30) days for the unexpired term of the vacated office.

17.4 Where a vacancy occurs for any reason in an office of any unit of the C.O.P that unit shall appoint a replacement within thirty (30) days for the unexpired term of the vacated office.

Article 18 - Authority of Officers

18.1 Political Leader

(a) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution the Political Leader shall be responsible to the C.O.P for the execution of its Political affairs and in discharge of these responsibilities he shall consult with other officers and or units of the C.O.P as he deems necessary.

(b) He shall have the right to exercise veto powers in the final selection of candidates for National and Local Government Elections after due consultation with the Screening Committee and Constituencies as may be required.

He shall appoint Senators, Aldermen and members to other national offices as may be required from time to time.

(c) He shall have the right to appoint an Advisory Political Affairs Team to assist him in the discharge of his responsibilities and to delegate such of his functions to any member of the Team as he may deem necessary.

18.2 Deputy Political Leaders

The Deputy Political Leaders shall perform duties as are relevant to their portfolios and as are assigned to them by the Political Leader.

- 18.3 Chairman
The C.O.P chairman shall preside at all meetings of the National Executive, National Council and National Assembly and shall be responsible for the proper conduct and the management of these units.
- 18.4 Deputy Chairman
In the absence of the Chairman at any meeting of a unit at which he is entitled to preside, the Deputy Chairman shall preside and shall enjoy for the time being the same rights as if he were Chairman.
- 18.5 Secretary - Finance
The Secretary - Finance shall cause proper books of accounts to be kept by the Secretariat and shall be responsible for:-
(a) The Annual budget of the party
(b) Quarterly statements of accounts to be presented to the National Executive
(c) Audited accounts to be presented to the National Assembly.
He shall open accounts at such bank or banks as the National Executive may decide from time to time including the signatories thereto.
- 18.6 Other National Officers
All other National Officers listed in Article 13.3 shall perform such duties consistent with their title and such other duties assigned to them from time to time by the National Executive.

Article 19 - Voting and Procedures

- 19.1 Only financial members of the C.O.P shall be entitled to hold office in any unit of the C.O.P and to vote at meetings.
- 19.2 Voting in all Elections in all units of the C.O.P shall be by secret ballot.
- 19.3 The Chairman of all units of the C.O.P shall have an original as well as a casting vote.
- 19.4 The Chairman of all units of the C.O.P shall determine the procedure to be followed in the conduct of meetings. He shall be guided by the acceptable rules of procedure.
- 19.5 In pursuance of Article 15.4 all resolutions for consideration by the National Assembly Conference shall be sent to the General Secretary not later than thirty (30) days before the Conference.
The National Council shall decide whether such resolutions will be included on the agenda of the conference

CHAPTER FIVE

Standing Committees and Responsibilities

Article 20 - Standing Committees

- 20.1 The Political Leader and his Deputies shall at the commencement of each term after the National Assembly Conference appoint the following standing committees and prescribe their terms of reference:
- (a) Political and Foreign Affairs
 - (b) Finance, Economics, Trade and Commerce.

 - (c) National Security and Legal Affairs
 - (d) Social Services
 - (e) Agriculture and Rural Development
 - (f) Health
 - (g) Education Science and Technology
 - (h) Planning, Land Development and environmental issues
 - (i) Sports, Culture & Youth Development
 - (j) Industrial Relations and Human Resource Development
 - (k) Culture and Youth Development
- 20.2 The membership of Standing Committees shall comprise:
- (a) Members of the Parliamentary and Local Government caucuses, exclusive of the Political Leader and Deputy Political Leaders, as assigned to various committees
 - (b) Not more than five other members of the C.O.P with the relevant skill and expertise.
- 20.3 In the process of achieving its objectives each Standing Committee shall pay special attention to the C.O.P' manifesto and policy documents and the agendas of Parliament and Local Government Authorities from time to time.
- 20.4 The Committees shall appoint their own Chairman and Secretary and shall bi-monthly present reports to the Political Leader and Chairmen of the Parliamentary and Local Government caucuses.
- 20.5 The quorum of meetings of Standing Committees shall be two-thirds of its membership

CHAPTER SIX

Special Provisions for Tobago

Article 21 - Tobago Congress

- 21.1 There shall be a unit of the Party established in Tobago known as the Tobago Congress hereinafter referred to as the T C. It shall comprise all members of the C.O.P resident in Tobago and shall be responsible for all affairs of the COP in Tobago.
- 21.2 The TC shall be structured to include constituencies and other units as may be considered necessary to effectively discharge its responsibilities.
- 21.3 The TC shall comprise the officers and other representatives as follows:-
- (a) Chairman
 - (b) Deputy Chairman
 - (c) General Secretary
 - (d) Treasurer
 - (e) Assistant General Secretary
 - (f) Education and Research Officer
 - (g) Communications and Public Relations Officer
 - (h) Chairman and Secretary of each Constituency Council and any other units which may be formed from time to time.
- 21.4 The above officers shall be elected at a conference of members of the C.O.P resident in Tobago and shall hold office for a period of three (3) years.
- 21.5 In the discharge of its responsibilities the TC shall operate in accordance with the constitution of the C.O.P and regulations established on its own accord and approved by the National Executive.
- 21.6 The TC shall be represented on the National Executive by its Chairman.
- 21.7 The TC shall be represented on the National Council by two of its officers and at the Statutory and Special National Assembly Conferences by twenty-five (25) additional delegates.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Miscellaneous Provisions

Article 22 - Notice of Meetings

- 22.1 Seven (7) days notice shall be given for meetings of all units of the C.O.P except the National Assembly.
- 22.2 Fourteen (14) days notice shall be given for all meetings of the National Assembly
- 22.3 No meeting shall be aborted only on the ground that sufficient notice has not been given provided however a quorum is present and the meeting ratifies the date and time of notice.

Article 23 - Code of Ethics

- 23.1.1 The C.O.P shall develop a Code of Ethics outlining standards of conduct expected from all members. All members are under an obligation and oath to avoid acts which may be considered liable to bring the C.O.P into disrepute.

Article 24 - Property of the C.O.P

- 24.1 All Property of the C.O.P of any kind whatever shall be vested for and on behalf of the C.O.P in the name of the Trustees, not exceeding three (3) to be appointed by the National Council.
- 24.2 If any Trustee resigns or is unable for whatever reason to perform his functions the National Council shall fill the vacancy as early as possible.
- 24.3 All funds and property of the C.O.P from whatever source shall immediately vest in the C.O.P. All assets and liabilities of any and all units shall vest in the C.O.P.

Article 25 - Operational Year

The Operational Year of the C.O.P shall be from 1st June to 30th May in each year.

Article 26 - Financial Year

The Financial Year of the C.O.P shall be from 1st April of any year to the 31st March of the following year, and the accounts of the C.O.P shall be prepared at least once every year and shall be examined and certified by the Auditors as hereinafter provided.

Article 27 - Casual Vacancies

All vacancies occurring among officers of the various units shall be filled by the respective unit for the period in which the officer will be absent.

Article 28 - Reserve Powers and Interpretation

- 28.1 The National Council shall have the power to determine matters on which this Constitution, rules and regulations or Standing orders made hereunder are silent or from which ambiguity or difficulty of interpretation or otherwise arises and its decision on such matters shall be final for all purposes whatever.
- 28.2 Unless otherwise specially stated, all matters to be prescribed and all rules and regulations to be made shall be done by the National Executive and approved by the National Council.
- 28.3 The word "He" or such masculine term shall also be interpreted as "She" or such feminine term.
- 28.4 Wherever the word Secretariat appears it shall mean the administrative office of the C.O.P wherever located from time to time.
- 28.5 Wherever the word Statutory appears it shall mean the meeting of the various units whenever due.
- 28.6 Community Services Officer shall mean the officer assigned by Community Circles to receive, present to and advise the Community Circle on problems affecting the relevant community.

Article 29 – Audit

The Auditor or Auditors shall be appointed at every Statutory meeting of the National Assembly provided that no member of the C.O.P may be appointed as Auditor.

The National Executive shall determine the remuneration thereto.

Article 30 - Regulation and Byelaws

The National Executive shall be empowered from time to time to formulate, adopt and amend regulations and byelaws to give effect to this constitution and for the efficient conduct of the business of the C.O.P. Regulations so formulated and approved by the National Council shall not be amended without the expressed authority of the said Council.

Article 31 - Amendment to the Constitution

- 31.1 The Constitution shall be amended only at a Special Conference of the National Assembly on the basis of written proposals submitted by a unit of the C.O.P and approved the National Council. The proposal must be specific to the Article to be amended.
- 31.2 A resolution to amend the Constitution must receive at least two-thirds (2/3) of the votes of the members present and entitled to vote.

Article 32 - Effective date

The Constitution shall come into effect the day following the meeting of members at which it was approved, and all transitional provisions shall be made by a transitional team appointed by the Political Leader.

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