



How to Organize a Democratic Club

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This manual was prepared by volunteers working under the direction of the Organization Committee of the California Democratic Council. The manual was written by Helen Myers, edited by Ware Myers. Information is based upon material developed at Workshops sponsored by the Organization Committee of the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee, and upon an earlier manual prepared by Kay Wilson, former chairman of Organization of the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee. Artwork, layout, and production were handled by Henry Mangravite and Eugene Greenwood.

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How to Organize a Democratic Club

Why Clubs?

How do we get Democrats into political organizations? How do we create political organizations for Democrats to get into?

In California the chartered Democratic club is the primary political group. It represents the focal point at which grass roots Democrats gather together to develop and carry out a portion of the overall, statewide Democratic effort. The more clubs there are, the more complete and the more effective this overall political effort will be—in finance, precinct work, campaign participation, political education, candidate selection, leadership potential, etc.

It is the natural goal, therefore, of the California Democratic Council to strive for at least one Democratic club in every community in the state, and more than one

wherever this is possible.

This manual has been prepared as an aid to accomplish this goal. It is designed to meet the needs of the Organization Chairmen of County Committees and County, Congressional and Assembly District Councils. It is also intended to be of help to any individual who wants to take the initiative himself to organize a club in his own community. Points to be covered include such matters as—

Where to Start

Planning for a Meeting

The Open-Membership Meeting

Techniques for Making Club a Going Concern

Where to Start

It Takes Only One!

If you are an Organization Chairman for a County Committee or a local Council, your first job is to find *one* person in a community who *wants* a Democratic club there. In every successful club there is at least one individual who wants a club and wants it enough to continue to encourage and needle the group into activity. Once this person has been found, the Organization Chairman can guide and encourage him.

If, on the other hand, you are the person who wants a Democratic club in the community, start the ball rolling yourself. Find out if the district council or the county committee has an Organization Chairman who can help you.

Begin At Home

Where to start a Democratic club is really easy. The place to take your first step toward organization is right at home in your own neighborhood. You begin by—

- (1) Starting small
- (2) With your friends or friends of your friends
- (3) A half-dozen to a dozen people
- (4) In your home or a friend's home



Planning for a Meeting

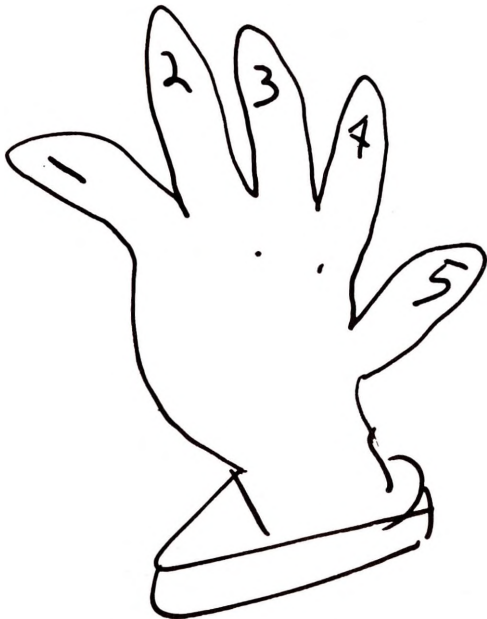
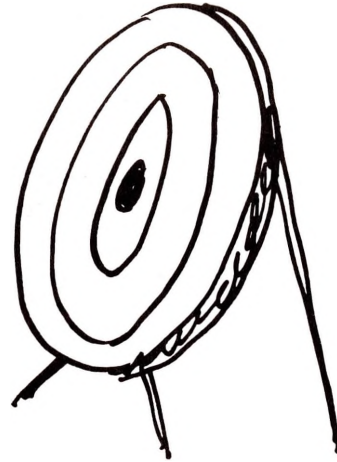
Time and Place

Talk to one or two friends or known Democrats about getting some people together to discuss the possibility of a Democratic club. Select a day of the week when your friends are not apt to be tied up in some regular activity like PTA or the Cub Scouts. Get a comfortable place to meet, preferably your home or that of a friend. Try to give to this meeting the freedom and informality of a bull session. Have some kind of food and drink on hand to help facilitate the discussion and the hashing over of ideas.

What to Shoot For

A. Give the first part of the evening over to talking about the reasons for having a Democratic club and what it can accomplish in your particular community. In short, let people sell themselves on the idea of having a club so they will all pitch in to get one going. It's no good if it remains just *your* idea.

B. Once the group is sold on having a club, begin to plan for an open-membership meeting.



1. Select an acting-chairman (usually the host or initiator of the idea is selected without the formality of a vote).
2. Explain the chartering process and arrange to get the proper forms for the open-membership meeting.
3. Compile a prospect list by getting the group to pool the names of people they know who might be potential members.
4. Plan a press release for the local papers.
5. Involve as many people as possible in the work of putting on the meeting. It is working together that helps develop group identification. But the acting chairman must follow-through to make sure people actually do get the various jobs done.

The Open-Membership Meeting

Physical Arrangements

A private home is usually the best place for first meetings. Some communities have small, comfortable meeting halls which are suitable. Also, small banquet rooms in local restaurants may sometimes be secured.

Arrange chairs in a circle so people can talk together as a group and not to each other's backs. This kind of seating arrangement is natural in a home; in a hall you will usually have to go to the trouble of rearranging the chairs.

Note: *Avoid* meeting halls which are large and bare (they create a chill, lonesome feeling), which do not permit smoking, where there are no facilities for serving food, and which have chairs in rows firmly anchored to the floor.



Getting A Good Turnout

A good turnout seldom "just happens"; usually you have to work for it.

1. Send out a meeting notice to your prospect list about a week in advance. Make it as attractive, as inviting, as intriguing as you can!
2. Call on the phone the day the notice is received. Find out if person thinks he can attend.
3. Phone the night before or the day of the meeting as a reminder. If possible, arrange to have someone pick up the prospects in a car. (This way you *know* they'll get there.)

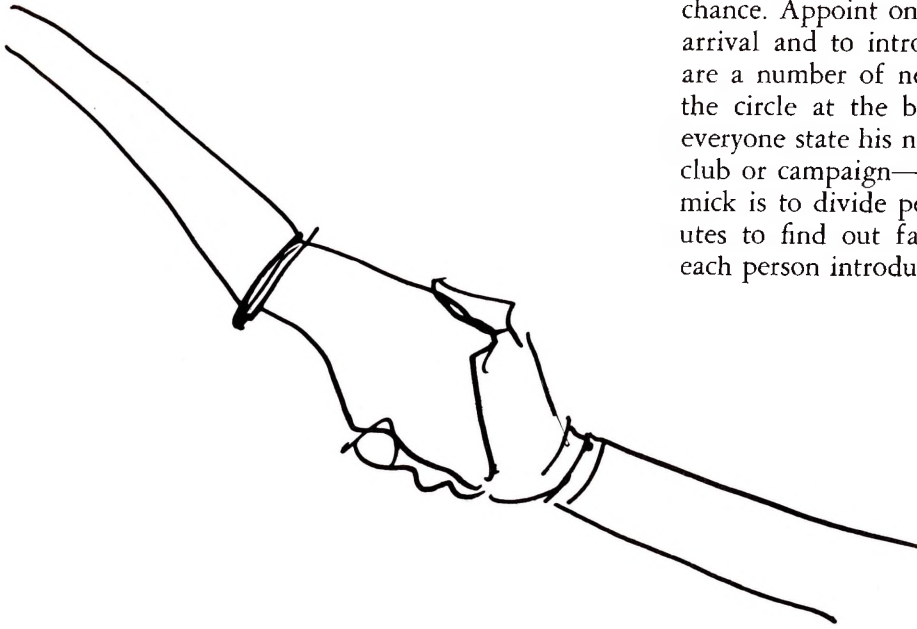
The Importance of Food

Food is a great social catalyst and morale builder. It should never be omitted. Meetings can sometimes open with dessert and coffee or potluck supper. More conventionally, refreshments are served at the end of the meeting. Sometimes instead of always serving the standard coffee and cookies, it adds a flilip to have a special, seasonal kind of dessert—like strawberry shortcake, gingerbread and whipped cream, cherry pie—and advertise it in the meeting notice. Specifying the dessert in the notice underscores the friendly tone of the gathering. A collection "kitty" by the door or at the table can help cover the cost.

Never underestimate the value of the social period. It permits people to circulate around a room, chatting here, listening there. It provides them with the opportunity to find out personal facts about each other and to discover mutual interests. And these are the ties which bind—the ties which help people feel they really "belong."



Welcoming the Member



The welcoming of members should not be left to chance. Appoint one or two people to welcome each new arrival and to introduce them to everyone else. If there are a number of new people in the room, going around the circle at the beginning of the meeting and having everyone state his name, his experience with a Democratic club or campaign—if any—is always good. Another gimmick is to divide people into pairs, give them three minutes to find out facts about each other, and then have each person introduce the other to the group.

Agenda for Meeting

1. Have acting chairman open meeting and give the background for calling the open-membership meeting.

2. If Organization Chairman is present, introduce him and let him briefly describe the "club movement" and outline the chartering process.

3. Bring any party Wheels to the meeting that you can—not to give speeches but to give lustre and prestige to the meeting. Have Wheel serve as a resource person on party organization and history. Let him answer questions members of the group may want to ask him.

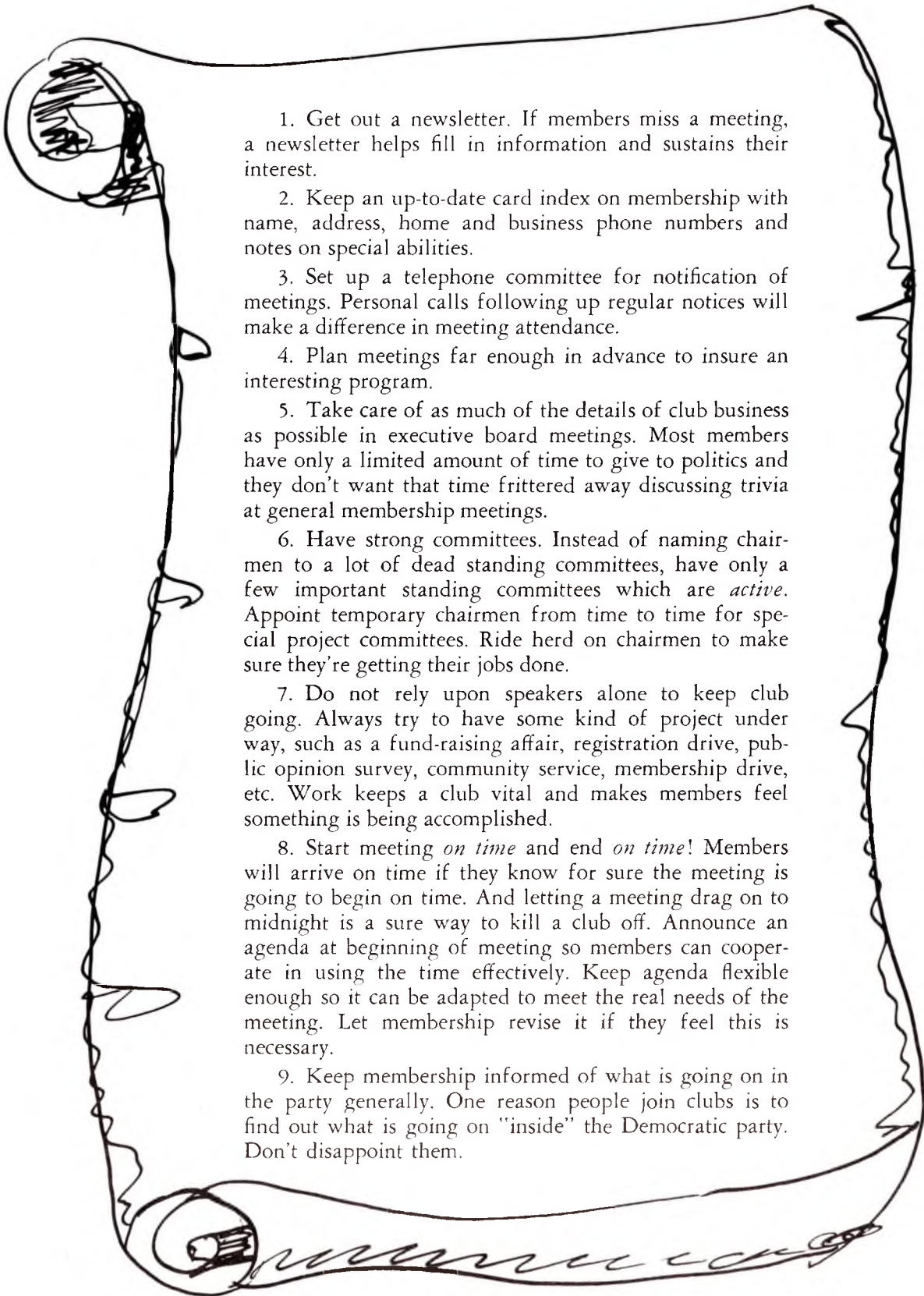
4. Give the group opportunity to discuss value of a club and what it can accomplish. The whole group, as well as the organizing core, must sell itself on the club idea.

5. Get group to vote to charter the club with its County Central Committee and to affiliate with the California Democratic Council.

Note: To qualify for membership in the CDC clubs must:

- a. Have a minimum of 20 paid-up members.
- b. Subscribe to the state platform of the Democratic Party.
- c. Support only Democrats for public office.
- d. Be a bona fide Democratic club, holding at least one regular meeting in each quarter, an annual or biennial election of officers, having a minimum of \$1.00 annual local club dues.
- e. Have an annual certification from its County Central Committee.
6. Select a name for the club, get roster of members and collect dues. (Collecting dues is the same as closing a sale).
7. Elect temporary officers. It's a good idea to elect the first slate of officers for only six months.
8. Select a regular meeting time and a regular meeting place if this is possible.
9. Have president appoint a constitution and by-laws committee to make a report for the next meeting. (See sample constitution and by-laws at back of pamphlet.)

Techniques for Making Club a Going Concern



1. Get out a newsletter. If members miss a meeting, a newsletter helps fill in information and sustains their interest.

2. Keep an up-to-date card index on membership with name, address, home and business phone numbers and notes on special abilities.

3. Set up a telephone committee for notification of meetings. Personal calls following up regular notices will make a difference in meeting attendance.

4. Plan meetings far enough in advance to insure an interesting program.

5. Take care of as much of the details of club business as possible in executive board meetings. Most members have only a limited amount of time to give to politics and they don't want that time frittered away discussing trivia at general membership meetings.

6. Have strong committees. Instead of naming chairmen to a lot of dead standing committees, have only a few important standing committees which are *active*. Appoint temporary chairmen from time to time for special project committees. Ride herd on chairmen to make sure they're getting their jobs done.

7. Do not rely upon speakers alone to keep club going. Always try to have some kind of project under way, such as a fund-raising affair, registration drive, public opinion survey, community service, membership drive, etc. Work keeps a club vital and makes members feel something is being accomplished.

8. Start meeting *on time* and end *on time*! Members will arrive on time if they know for sure the meeting is going to begin on time. And letting a meeting drag on to midnight is a sure way to kill a club off. Announce an agenda at beginning of meeting so members can cooperate in using the time effectively. Keep agenda flexible enough so it can be adapted to meet the real needs of the meeting. Let membership revise it if they feel this is necessary.

9. Keep membership informed of what is going on in the party generally. One reason people join clubs is to find out what is going on "inside" the Democratic party. Don't disappoint them.

ARTICLE V — DUTIES OF OFFICERS

- Sec. 1. — The president shall preside over meetings and be responsible for the overall direction of the club activities.
- Sec. 2. — The Vice-President shall act to assist the President in every way, and shall be specifically charged with responsibility of acting as Program Chairman.
- Sec. 3. — The Corresponding Secretary shall be responsible for handling all correspondence of the organization under the direction of the President.
- Sec. 4. — The Recording Secretary shall keep a record of all meetings of the organization, a roll of its members, and a copy of the formal reports of all officers.
- Sec. 5. — The Treasurer shall receive and disburse the funds of the organization. Routine and recurring expenditures of less than \$_____ may be authorized in advance by the Executive Board and paid by the Treasurer upon presentation. When a club project has been approved in principle by the membership, and a budget for the project has been authorized by the Executive Board, the Board may authorize the Treasurer to make payments within the limits of the budget upon presentation of bills. Special expenditures, including contributions to candidates or causes, must be approved by the membership at a regular meeting.
- Sec. 6. — The Committee Chairmen shall assume such responsibilities as are defined by the elected officers and the Executive Board.

ARTICLE VI — AMENDMENTS

- Sec. 1. — This constitution may be amended by a majority vote at one meeting and a 2/3rds majority vote at the next regular meeting, provided that the membership be informed in writing of the proposed constitutional amendment to be submitted at said meeting.
- Sec. 2. — The By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote upon the recommendation of the Executive Board, or by a 2/3rds majority vote in lieu of such recommendation.

ARTICLE VII — BY-LAWS

1. A quorum shall be declared to exist at any regularly called membership meeting of the organization, or at any special meeting of which all have been informed in writing one week in advance at which 20% of the membership is present.
2. A quorum of the Executive Board shall be 5 members.
3. Annual dues shall be in the amount of \$ _____, to be apportioned as follows: _____
4. No money shall be paid from the funds of this organization except by check signed by both the Treasurer and one other officer.
5. Proxies shall not be valid at either membership or Executive Board meetings.
6. When delegates and alternates cannot be elected to represent this organization at Councils and/or Conventions in accordance with this Constitution by reason of lack of time, inability to convene a regularly called meeting, emergency vacancies among the elected delegates or alternates, or other sufficient cause, then the President, with the approval of a majority of the elected officers, may appoint delegates and alternates from the membership.

... and in conclusion...

Getting A Good Turnout

Agenda for Meeting

The Importance of Food

Welcoming the Member

How to Organize a Democratic Club

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Physical Arrangements

Follow Up:

Record Keeping:

~~ms Helen Meyers (Linder)~~
~~ms Leo Matalend Santa Paula~~
~~Domine Berello - S. L. O.~~



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