

**DOCUMENT 17:**  
**'Suggested Explanation of the ISL Platform, (by Benoni branch)',**  
**published in *The International*, January 4, 1919.**

The International Socialist League founds itself upon the principle of the class struggle.

The class struggle pre-supposes that modern society is based on the capitalist system of production, that is, the exploitation of wage labour by an employing class.

This system, first evolving in England at the close of the middle ages and spreading later to all the other countries of the world, tends inevitably to the destruction of the individual ownership of small industries and one-man shops, and to the concentration of all machinery and natural resources into large industry on a colossal scale owned and controlled by a small privileged class.

This concentration of capital in the hands of a few involves at the other pole, the concentration and forced mobilisation of labour into large armies of workers, and the conversion of the mass of the people into wage-earning proletarians – propertyless and utterly divorced from the control of the means of production as well as from the products of their labour.

The small tool develops into the big machine. The one-man shop into the great factory employing thousands of workmen.

The product of this development of industry and invention falls into the hands, not of society, but of the capitalist class, who by their ownership of the machinery of production control the Government and all other domains of social life, as well as the lives of the working class. Capitalism pollutes everything that it touches.

For the workers the result of this development of industry is unemployment and destitution for a large number, the loss of individual liberty, with massacre by the

million in the stupendous conflicts which are the natural outcome of the competition of various national capitalist combines.

The advent of machinery and the large industry creates a saving of labour by the hundred and the thousand-fold; not as yet in the reduction of the number of labourers required by the employers.

But the marshalling of the workers into large masses under single managements also generates among them the spirit of co-operation and solidarity as a class. With the result that, the people having learnt to labour in common, nothing now remains but for them to appropriate the fruits of their labour in common.

This will be done by transferring the capitalist means of production – the earth and its fruits, mines and quarries, raw materials, tools and machinery, means of exchange, etc – from private to social ownership; and thus effect such a revolution that capitalist industry, which has hitherto been a source of misery and oppression to the classes whom it has despoiled, may become the source of the most comprehensive social harmony.

By becoming masters of the product of their toil, the workers will emancipate themselves from the slavery of wage labour.

To effect this revolution is the work of the proletariat in all lands, and by them alone can it be achieved, as all other classes have a common interest in the continuation of the capitalist system.

The working class and the capitalist class have therefore nothing in common.

The interests of the workers are identical in all lands; and all wage-labourers have a common aim irrespective of any difference of colour and race. It therefore follows that labour cannot emancipate itself in South Africa until it has conquered all race prejudice and antipathy of colour. The emancipation of labour is a task in which the workers of all lands have a share.

The economic domination of the capitalist class is maintained by capitalist control of the public power. The first step in the proletarian revolution will therefore be the capture of that public power by and on behalf of the whole working class: thus asserting the political dictatorship of the proletariat.

Whether the political dictatorship of the proletariat will be best effected in South Africa through the present representative institutions or by a Council of Workmen, will be decided by the degree of parliamentary representation enjoyed by the revolutionary proletariat when the hour of revolution strikes. The disfranchisement of the great bulk of the South African proletariat will in any case render necessary a Council of Workmen with local Soviets to control the situation. Meanwhile elections to public bodies shall be considered as part of the platform propaganda of Socialism, whenever expedient.

Under the shield of political dictatorship the proletariat will destroy the oppressive institutions of the capitalist state, the courts of law, the police, the prisons, the armed power and the bludgeon of Government.

It will organise the industry of the community, and nurture the proletarian control and management thereof in the whole and in its parts.

All repressive institutions having vanished with the repression of the proletariat,

nothing will remain except the need to maintain and increase the productive power of industry by an ever-expanding development of machinery and natural resources and co-operation of labour forces.

Each individual plant will be controlled by its own Committee of Workmen. Each individual industry by its Association of such Committees. Industry as a whole by combination of these associations into one Industrial Republic, national and international, which will co-ordinate the industrial activities and supply the needs of all the people.

Thus, with the obligation of all to work, all classes will vanish, and the last act of the political dictatorship of the proletariat will be to abolish itself. The Class State will die out. Nothing will remain but the administration of things, leaving all men free to develop themselves according to their boundless possibilities.

To accomplish this revolution in South Africa is the aim of the International Socialist League. Already the path has been cleared by the glorious Socialist Revolution in Russia on November 7th, 1917. And although the development of capitalist industry already described herein has not reached general maturity in South Africa, the advent of the proletarian revolution in Europe makes imminent the destruction of capitalist domination in all countries.

It is the work of the ISL to educate, agitate and organise the workers for the great task that is ahead of effecting the revolution in our own land. It is especially its work to attend to the aspect of the struggle peculiar to South Africa, occasioned by the presence in South Africa of a large mass of unlettered native population, newly emerging from primitive manhood, and partially assimilated by the system of wage labour. To awaken and inspire our native fellow workers to grapple with their responsibility as part and parcel of the world proletariat must be our urgent duty. As part of this task the white workers must be encouraged to educate, organise and co-operate with their native workers at the place of work in mine, factory and workshop: in order that the Socialist Republic of South Africa may be inaugurated by the unanimous solidarity of all the workers.

### ***Editorial Note:***

*In a Maritzburg court in April 1919, Communists D. Ivon Jones and L.H. Greene were charged with incitement to public violence for publishing the following pamphlet and fined £75 (or four months) by the magistrate but were acquitted on appeal to the Supreme Court.*