

**DOCUMENT 14:**

**Extract from report 'Our Annual Gathering - Notes of the Conference', *The International*, January 11, 1918.**

Jubilant and happy are the only words to describe the Third Annual Conference of the I.S.L. held last Sunday in the Palmerston Hall. In spite of the fact that we were not in the Trades Hall, and had to beat a retreat to the 'West End' of the town, the comrades rolled up in greater numbers than to any previous Conference. The spirit prevailing was one of complete harmony on the floor of the class struggle. Faith in that principle finally made buoyant and victorious in the proletarian revolution in Russia.

Besides the Rand Branches of the I.S.L. delegates were also present from Durban: Comrades S M Pettersen, S G Rich and B L E Sigamoney of the Indian Workers' Union. Comrade Andrew Watson presided, and on opening referred to 'the skeletons' along the road in the fight for working class emancipation.

The first business was the discussion of the Management Committee's Report for the year. The report was long, indicating a strenuous year. The items were quickly passed over up to 'International Affiliations,' when Comrade Colin Wade moved:

'That this Third Annual Conference of the ISL rejoices beyond measure at the triumph of the Russian Revolutionary proletariat under the banner of the Bolshevik wing of the Social Democratic Party, and pledges on behalf of the advanced proletariat of South Africa its growing support to stand by the Russian workmen against the Capitalist Governments of the whole world, that of South Africa included.'

It was further resolved to get into touch with and send greetings to the representative of the Russian Revolution in London. It was also resolved to ask Comrade Andrews to get into touch with Comrade Litvinoff.

On the question of the Stockholm Conference it was resolved to ask the Delegate, Comrade Andrews, to remain in England a little while longer, pending developments.

Arising from the Report, it was resolved to instruct the incoming M.C. to concentrate their efforts on the organisation of the workers during the coming year, and to keep the principles of the Russian Revolution before the workers, by leaflet distribution and public meetings.

A very instructive discussion arose out of the Socialist Sunday School reports, and methods of teaching Socialism was a topic on which nearly all delegates had something to say, and Francisco Ferrer, Montesorri and other names were freely bandied about. The outcome was the formation of a Socialist Sunday School Council . . .

Discussion on administrative amendments occupied some time and Conference then proceeded to the Draft Statement or Workshop Leaflet on the native workers for white workers. This and other items on working class propaganda among the natives and whites, irrespective of colour, gave rise to several interesting discussions during the day. The final note of the Conference, which had sat with intervals from 10 am to past 10 pm, was a motion by Comrade Sigamoney, when he spoke as an Indian worker protesting against the outrageous violation of the principle of civil equality contained in the new Railway Regulations as applied to natives, Indians, coloured people.

The chairman congratulated the comrades on the best Conference the League had yet held: endorsed by Comrades Wade and Pettersen, and the comrades dispersed with the lusty singing of the Red Flag right through, and cheers for the Russian Revolution, the attendance having scarcely diminished to the end.

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

*During a boycott of concession stores on the Witwatersrand organised by African mineworkers because, in the words of **The International**, 'prices of commodities have gone up double while the wages of the native labourer remain the same', the International Socialist League circulated a leaflet in Sesuto and Zulu throughout the compounds – the first time a direct approach had been made to the African workers in their own languages.*