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Report on the general meeting of the International Socialist League (SA) published in *The International*, September 24, 1915.

There was a very full attendance of members of the League at the General Meeting held in the Trades Hall last Wednesday, the 22nd inst., Comrade Crisp in the chair. At the meeting held the previous week it had been decided to submit the question of withdrawing from the South African Labour Party to a plebiscite of the members. There was a full poll of members during the week. The plebiscite resulted in an overwhelming majority in favour of severing all connection with the SALP, and the announcement was received by the meeting with enthusiasm. W.H. Andrews then amid further acclamation resumed the chair, which he had vacated on his recent resignation from the party, and the work of organising under the new conditions was immediately proceeded with.

Commissioner Street and Vrededorp Branches were affiliated to the League.

S.P. Bunting, MPC, W. Light, MPC, A.B. Dunbar, and Robert Barnet were appointed four additional members to form, with the officers, the Management Committee of the League.

The officers are: W.H. Andrews, Chairman; A.F. Crisp, MPC, and J.A. Clark, MPC, Vice-Chairmen; G. Weinstock, Treasurer; D. Ivon Jones, Secretary.

The Press Committee's report was adopted. The Provisional Constitution was discussed and adopted, the name of the organisation to be 'The International Socialist League.' Its Provisional Constitution will prevail until a conference of the League can be called.

The League then formally nominated its Parliamentary Candidates. W.H. Andrews for Georgetown, J.A. Clark, MPC, Langlaagte, and R.J. Hall, MA, for Dundee. The question of contesting further constituencies was placed in the hands of the Management Committee, with recommendations.

The meeting then proceeded to work on the question of Election Finance, and most of the old hands who worked such wonders at the central organisation of the Provincial Council Elections were roped into harness.

In singing the 'Red Flag' at the close, the members felt the responsibility of the great step that they had taken, and there was a resolve to spare no energy to make the new organisation worthy of the great principle for the sake of which we had so reluctantly and after so much anxious deliberation parted company with the older party. This parting of the ways was taken by most not without a pang at the severing of old associations. But it was generally felt that the ruthless manner in which the pro-war majority had scrapped old workers for the cause was only one symptom of the complete collapse of the party from its long cherished ideals, and of its now almost abject subserviency to the dictates of a capitalist press riding on the wave of a public stampede of its own creating.

The League can already count in its fold some of the most alert branches of the one-time Labour Party. Commissioner Street, Jeppe, Vrededorp, Georgetown, Valley Central, Belgravia, Mayfair, and Benoni. The last named branch is a tower of strength, as befits that classic spot. Durban and Capetown we trust will soon be organised into the League, in some form or other. And in the period after the elections the League looks forward to grappling with those great South African no less than International problems which in its fatty degeneration the SALP was getting afraid to face.

Editorial Note:

The slogan 'Workers of the World Unite' created problems in South Africa, where the working class embraced men and women of all races. Membership of the Labour Party had been predominantly white, and the black working class was largely unorganised, underprivileged and underpaid, as well as often underemployed. Nevertheless, the socialist element in the Labour Party had pressed for the inclusion of black workers, but the furthest they had been able to advance was the adoption at the 1914 conference of a resolution declaring membership of the Labour Party open to 'all persons of either sex of the age of 18 and upwards who endorse the objects of the Party and are accepted by the branch of the Party which they wish to join,' but adding: 'It is undesirable to admit Coloured persons to membership who have not given practical guarantees that they agree to the Party's policy of upholding and advancing White standards'. The socialists objected to this insulting definition, and Andrews declared during the debate:

'The working class of this country are the Native people, and if this is really a Labour Party and not a middle-class party, as it appears to be rapidly becoming, we must admit the Native.'

The split in the Labour Party reflected divisions not only over the issue of proletarian internationalism, but also over the meaning of proletarian internationalism in the South African context. Not all the International Socialists saw eye to eye on this question, but the more far-sighted of the ISL leadership took a principled stand from the outset and immediately steered the party in the direction of non-racialism and equality. This was brought out sharply in the fourth issue of the ISL's weekly journal, and was the subject of a key policy resolution moved by S.P. Bunting at the first conference of the ISL held in Johannesburg in January 1916.