

scape-goat that is being attacked to divert attention from the sins or failures of the Party leaders? Of that, as well as of the strange series of articles in Inprecorr of July 14, 21, 28 and Aug. 4 last, more may be written hereafter, – probably after a meeting shortly to be held of those who attended the conference of 27 December last already reported to you, to hear a report on the absence of any reply to the representations of that Conference of⁶ the E.C.C.I.

For me personally the whole affair has been and is a tragedy, for I have no other interest than Communist work, but I think it results rather tragically for the Party also. Certainly this continuous slander produces confusion among the readers of the paper, both those who know me and therefore disagree with it, and also, I think, those who do not but wonder what on earth all this mudslinging has to do with them or their cause?

Yours fraternally

S.P. Bunting
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RGASPI, 495/64/119/22-5.

Original in English.

Typed.

Stamped: no. 8422 27.XI.32.

## 18

### **Report of Committee of Opponents of PB, CPSA to ECCI, 13 November 1932<sup>1</sup>**

#### INTRODUCTORY OF THE REPORT

#### RE THE CONFERENCE OF THE 27TH DECEMBER 1931

Resulting out of the Communist Party of South Africa having taken a holiday in organising the oppressed, exploited and voiceless masses in South Africa while

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#### **Doc. 17**

6. Judging by the context, 'of' should be 'from' here.

#### **Doc. 18**

1. The sequence of events that led to the appearance of this document is described in the document itself but the story is complicated, some turns of it are unclear, and it is difficult to understand it without reading documents 18 and 19 (vol. II) together. The following is the editors' interpretation of the text of the two documents.

On 14 November 1931, in the wake of Bunting's expulsion from the party, CPSA's Johannesburg branch convened a meeting at which it decided to call a party conference to discuss the policy of the PB. The PB was invited to attend but sent its representatives, mostly white. As a result the policy debate was polarised along racial lines with the opponents of the PB winning the battle. The conference appointed a small committee that was to report the matter to the Comintern.

its five members (only) of the P.B. (sometimes called District Party Committee) were considering who should be expelled in the next issue of Umsebenzi – some not reported in Umsebenzi because of their unimportance and inferiority or because they are mostly Blacks (whose cause the Communist Party is supposed to take up very seriously) and also because in the ranks of the concerned body there was a good deal of doubt whether these representatives or leaders were all genuine – the Johannesburg Branch convened a meeting of members of the Communist Party in Johannesburg and invited the P.B. to attend.

The meeting resulted in a fight, members of the P.B. objecting to members holding the meeting in the Party Hall. However they were chucked outside the Hall and the meeting proceeded exceedingly well. Minutes and resolutions of the meeting were accordingly handed to the P.B. but entirely ignored. It was then that the Conference of the 27th was planned should the P.B. not respond to the demands. This took place in Nov. 14th 1931.

To this conference of the 27th December 1931 the P.B. was again invited. The response was a group of whites and three black officials of the Party under the name of Ikaka or I.R.A. to break the conference. In spite of their vain attempt to break the conference it was a great success. At the request of the landlord of Inchcape Hall the conference was transferred to Albert Street Hall.

The fight that took place there (Inchcape Hall) demonstrated more than anything else in the eyes of delegates and spectators who happened to be on the scene at the time, the hypocrisy if not chauvinism in the true sense of the term of the party officials. The fight was between the Blacks and Whites. The Party members who have the machine of the Party in their own hands would do anything detrimental to either movement or workers in order to keep their positions regardless of consequences. However, the delegates in full confidence in the International appointed a small committee to draw up the report and send it to Headquarters (Moscow). Also decided that the committee shall from time to time visit branches. It was stressed at the Conference that no opposition of any nature must be carried or allowed to prevail in the Party. Branches to be kept up as usual. Branches to watch the occasion when the Party will call a conference and send delegates. It is said that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. The Party to day seems to believe the contrary.

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The committee sent an appeal to the Comintern but received no reply. It then wrote a full scale report on the events and presented it to the second conference that took place on 13 November 1932. This report together with the minutes of the second conference (document 19) was sent to the secretary of the ECCI with the following typewritten letter: 'Dear Comrade. I enclose a report and Minutes of a meeting held here on the 13th instant which speak for themselves.' A hand-written note added: 'We should like an answer by return.' The letter dated 16 November 1932 was signed by Garner Makabeni (RGASPI, 495/64/122/1).



REPORT TO THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF PARTY

## MEMBERS DISSATISFIED WITH THE PARTY POSITION

We, the committee members of the C.P. (S.A.) appointed at the Conference held on the 27th December 1931 at Albert Street Hall Johannesburg and charged with the task of summing up the procedure of the conference and sending it to Headquarters Moscow, hereby present the following report.

The members of the C.P. (S.A.) realising and trusting no other Party in the whole universe, saw the danger of the Party they loved being at the point of death and deconstruction. They did what they could to rescue the Party from the danger but all in vain. They then decided to send their appeal to the International from which they hoped that means of rescuing the Party would immediately be forthcoming.

This committee regret very lamentably that up to now no reply has been received. We have had information that our report got through but regarding the cause of delay the committee is in darkness.

The committee as was instructed by the Conference had absolutely no intention whatsoever of organising an opposition to the Party. It was the Party clique of officials who rushed to branches whenever they heard of branch propaganda meetings with the assistance of this committee and threw confusion on the branch members, which resulted on some occasions in their being chased away from the branches. We preached on behalf of the Party and advanced Party slogans. In spite of some of the active members being expelled in Umsebenzi issues, the members disapproved of it and demanded the Conference of the Party of which right they were denied.

The Party position is worse than ever now. Native masses are not only neglected and no agitation is carried in their localities, but are accused by the officials of the Party of being barbarians 'from the long grass' which abuse originated on our late Comrade Nkosie who is blamed of having cracked his head against the brick wall, comrades! This is no exaggeration, comrades from Durban including Com. Makabeni have been accused of this crime. Coms. Moroke, Miriam and F. Mopu protested against this attitude. A few comrades from Durban whilst in Johannesburg would not allow the word 'Barbarism' to be used. Com. Mlungisi gave Sepeng a blow in the presence of the P.B. for using the word against him.

The Party 'cleaning out' of members trusted by native masses has bewildered and disgusted the native membership.

They see black comrades expelled for daring to hold any views of their own. Native comrades are directly and indirectly driven away from the Party offices. The report will go on to show this under 'trade unions'.

The Party is compared to the I.C.U. and other reformist organisations. Masses ask 'where is and what has become of the C.P. we trusted?' The Party has become mainly a white man's affair, almost completely in the hands of the Jewish Workers Club (mostly petty bourgeois).

Party Branches and groups.

Because Branches and groups expressed their dissatisfaction and demanded the conference where they hoped matters would be rectified they have been abandoned by Head Office and tended to fall in pieces, had it not been for the endeavours of this committee to revive them. All the P.B. did in this was in one or two cases to bring individuals, some of whom were not members of the Party at all, to Johannesburg for Party training courses (with the Party officials) bribing them with promises of jobs or trips overseas.

Party disconnection with the masses

The Party has been kept in darkness, background, out of publicity, hiding behind the Gesert, the 'F.O.S.U.' etc.

On Mayday 1932 there was no procession, no Party Banners, no native meetings and no natives at all at the meeting in Johannesburg City steps,<sup>2</sup> except on April 30 (day before) when an African comrade was pushed from behind to speak and was battered by the police, picked out, but the white protectors, who at all time of meeting protected the white speakers from the danger of hooligans and police interference, did not protect the African speaker.

This gave some suspicion even to the 'hangers on' of the Party that the Party had nothing in common with natives.

Umsebenzi has become the mythological paper with the result that it has lost its circulation among people. Most of the subscribers have given it up. It publishes things that absolutely do not happen. It speaks of huge successes which are not known to people in the supposed areas. It gives account of conferences which had never been held at all. On International Women's Day according to Umsebenzi a conference was held. But this Committee knows full well that no such conference was ever attempted at all (typical of Umsebenzi 'news'). Other 'conferences' have been not thought of until the day before when leaflets and slogans are issued but of course too late to have an effect.

A.F.T.U. conferences held in April 1932.

What did we see in Umsebenzi? 'Delegates from farm workers, Peasant organisations and workers from factories' etc. etc.

The conference was held but who actually attended it? Jewish workers from the Jewish Workers Club and the Party officials, Comrade Makoe, Chairman of the Clothing Workers Union, and Comrade Masigo, committee member of the Laundry Workers Union, both Africans, attended the Conference un-invited. Comrade Makoe was turned out, voted out by a small crowd of white people. The conference started at 11.30 a.m. and finished off at 1 p.m.

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2. City Hall steps.



Boasting of moving of masses in the Cape and Formation of Dockworkers' Union by the Party.

The Party boasts of activities which have no relationship with it at all. The movement in Middleberg had nothing to do with the Party. Cradock is the stronghold of the Independent African National Congress. All activities there are due to that body. Because of that movement in the Cape the Party offered to certain individuals Party training course. It is doubtful whether these fellows will ever become members of the Party as they are now losing interest in the headquarters of the Party.

Allied organisations with the Party

Ikaka Labasebenzi, A.F.T.U. and F.O.S.U.

All these organisations have become merely slogans of the Party no longer in existence. People joined them enthusiastically and left them being disgusted.

F.O.S.U.

Members who had been expelled from the Party and joined the F.O.S.U. The Party would not tolerate seeing them in this organisation. They did all they could to chase these members. Of course this caused a great confusion and disgust to people who did not know what it was all about. People marched away from the organisations in great numbers. The result was the inception of the 'League of Soviet Friends' by expelled members and those who took interest in the movement. Bunting was not approached or consulted by the founders of this League because of his alleged Policy, as they said, of 'Hamba Gahle'.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact Bunting, though accused of having formed this organisation, did all he could to discourage such a splitting movement which is now almost dwindled out.

Ikaka Labasebenzi

Members have deserted this organisation.

Comrade Gana Makabeni who was elected as Chairman of the organisation on his arrival from Transkei was expelled and a white gentleman appointed instead.

This was done in his absence and when at the meeting one day he was taking the chair as usual he was told by the Secretary that he was no longer the Chairman of the organisation. On his (Makabeni) demanding the reason why he had been expelled, he received a heavy blow from the Secretary 'Marks'<sup>4</sup> – 'that great hero'. That is how the Chairman of Ikaka was expelled from Ikaka organisation.

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3. 'Hamba Gahle' or 'Hamba Kahle': 'go well', 'go carefully', 'go slowly', 'take care' in Nguni languages. Used here to describe Bunting's alleged conciliatory stance.

4. J.B. Marks.

A.F.T.U. and Trade Unions

The Federation is no longer a Federation of trade unions as it was once under leadership of Weinbren and the Party a few years back. It is merely a slogan that does not attract any workers as it has been many a time discredited by Party individuals. People demand to know what the Federation is, when there is not a single trade union under it. The slogan of 'Federation' is more harmful than good when it only means an individual does as he pleases in its name. That is how we see the Federation.

It drove away the only two trade unions that still remained under the Party, Clothing Workers' Union and Laundry Workers' Union. These two unions are composed of revolutionary and intelligent elements. Some were members of the Party though they had devoted their time and interest in the trade union movement. They were determined to keep the trade unions under the Party leadership regardless of the disagreement of Party members. But the Party succeeded in ordering them to 'pack and go'. The General meeting of the Laundry Workers' Union instructed its committee to pack all the books and other belongings of the union from the Party premises and that was done. The Union now meets elsewhere.

The Clothing Workers Union.

This Union had some difficulties in getting its books which were hidden away by Wolton and Bach.

After so many instructions and resolutions to the effect that if the union was still using G. Makabeni as its Secretary it had better leave the Party premises, members preferred a thorough explanation from the Party officials and this was offered.

After the members of the Union had listened impartially to both sides Makabeni and Party officials, it decided to leave the premises. The secretary was instructed to come the following morning and pack away all property of the Union. On arriving at the Party premises the following morning the Secretary noticed that all the books were gone. He asked the native comrades who were sleeping in the premises. Marks whispered that late at night Bach and Wolton came in and asked what was the decision of the meeting and they were told. They took away all the books of the Union in the name of the 'Federation'. Two meetings of the Union were summoned by the Federation but not a single soul turned up. When members of the union went to demand the books Wolton and Bach had to hide themselves in a small office and lock it up.

To avoid the fight that the members intended doing the matter had to be taken to the Native Commissioner's Court and through that the books were returned to the Union. Besides all through the so called Federation had nothing to do with the daily struggles of the Union. All the Federation could do was without discussing the question at issue with members of the Union, to issue circulars calling for a strike without any lead or preparation whatsoever.



Mine Workers Union City Deep.

This Union was abandoned by the Federation because presumably it was the work of Bunting and African comrades. Members of this union kept on going to the Federation or Party for assistance for their Union. The Party took no interest, until these members gave it up as a bad job.

Garment Workers Union at Cape Town under Federation.

This Committee can not get any report of the work of this Union. It seems to have gone the same direction as that of the Miners'. So has the 'Chemical Workers Union': these Unions are strangled by the Party almost at their birth.

Country Branches.

The Party has disappointed the country branches enormously. Broken off all connection with the country as a whole. Take Transkei, members from various branches in Transkei have been writing to the Party and sending articles to Umsebenzi on the conditions prevailing in the country but just because G. Makabeni had some responsibility or was mentioned frequently in the correspondence and Bunting the same, these members have been ignored. There is no Branch in existence under the Head Office influence now. The branches in outside districts are ignorant of the nature of the situation at Head Office (Johannesburg). All branches in Transkei, Bloemfontein, Durban, Paardekop, Pine Town and other small places don't know what has happened in the Party. This committee has never written to them and acquainted members with the position in Transvaal or Johannesburg because it was well aware that it might create confusion and suspicion of members to the C.P.

Lekhotla Labafo

The committee does not know why this organisation ceased publicity in Umsebenzi. All the committee could say is that prominent members of this body made a visit to the Party, and ever since we never heard of them again.

Demonstration.

No demonstrations are being held at all this year. When the Party calls upon masses to demonstrate by circulars and publication in Umsebenzi it only means a white people's meeting to be held at City Steps<sup>5</sup> where a 'nigger' cannot have his share at the meeting.

Native Service Contract Bill

When this Bill was all the time under debate in Parliament the Party called no demonstration in protest against this slave driving law.

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5. See footnote 2.

Unemployed natives and coloured.

The Party made some attempt to organise the unemployed natives. This union was very promising but how long was it kept? Only one week. Now there is not a single soul of the unemployed workers union or council as they called it.

At this critical moment of the day when workers are turned out of every industry to join the thousands on the streets condemned to starvation, particularly the Africans who are moving up and down demanding true and honest leaders to assist them, we see Party individuals rapidly discrediting the Party which a few years back had been established throughout South Africa. Today the Party has devoted its time and energy in expelling active members of the Party and then sat still and done nothing, so long as it has cleared away Buntingism or Right danger as they say, it took a rest. Deportees or victims of Riotous Assemblies Act cannot enter the doors of the Party to-day. Mrs. Nkosie is wandering up and down the streets of Johannesburg. She cant get work but would not pass the doors of the Party.

Durban in 1930 or Dingaan's Day.

Comrade Nkosie's mother and wife never wiped tears from their eyes whilst in Durban, as it is the native custom that if one dies at the battle field, relatives and parents do not cry for him. It is not announced that 'he is dead': he is left 'behind' they say. So it was the same thing with Comrade Nkosie. Nkosie's mother addressed two meetings at Cartright's flats and many at the Party Hall in Durban. Comrade Nkosie's wife was quite determined to follow the footsteps of her husband. Members of Durban showed their determination, which was one of the teachings of Com. Nkosie, that if one dies another must take his place with the least hesitation. These comrades have been deported in groups after severe punishment in gaol. Gaoled and deported, group after group.

It is again the native belief that a leader must stick to what he says. That was why they believed in Comrade Nkosie and did what he used to tell them.

What is the position to-day?

Comrade Nkosie's mother is crying daily and is working in the kitchens. Com. Mrs. Nkosie is roaming the streets of Johannesburg looking for work and she cant get it.

Wolton and Ballenger,<sup>6</sup> of the I.C.U. 'Yase England' not 'Africa'.

Wolton who is responsible for all this is correctly compared to Ballenger who came to S. Africa with the sole determination to destroy that 'once powerful I.C.U.' and succeeded. Today nobody knows how Ballenger lives and pays his pikininis,<sup>7</sup> who sweep the office. Under the circumstances personalities cannot be avoided as they are based on nothing but facts.

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6. Ballinger.

7. Pickanins – a common term of reference to small African children.



Deportees and Party.

Comrades just imagine what could be the feeling of these comrades when some of them, if not the most, have no homes because of their activities in the Communist Party? They are chased from pillar to post by Pirow's Government – and they are not allowed a rest in the verandah of the C.P. hall, when they see people who do not care a hang whether the Party goes to pieces so long as they can exploit and prostitute the Party for their own ends, swanking with suits, provided with food and shelter, kept in the Party as leaders. The people who outside the Party declare Wolton as 'boss' and dare not and would not have different views from him no matter how they see mistakes committed. People who when confronted with questions by Branch members on the situation of the Party in S.A. would try to avoid the questions by blaming the International (which we believe hasn't the picture of the Party in S.A. at disposal). People who are suppose to be out for propaganda meetings but actually pursue their own pleasure and give wonderful reports on the success they had.

Native Suspicion on 'White Brothers'.

Comrades, Africans, it is to be greatly regretted that the Party has aroused great suspicion which had almost gone out of the minds of old members of the Party on 'white brothers'. Now they show their true colour of believing in their superiority over blacks. There was once a time when the C.P. was only composed of white members. But when it adopted the true policy of the Communist Party to embrace all nationalities of workers some members left the Party under excuses that it was not time yet, to combine with natives, and those who were for principles of communism remained, and as the Party became predominantly of black some of the whites left without showing any cause of so doing. What do we see now? These whites resuming their old seats in the Party because probably 'kaffirs' have been swept away.

The 'Communist League of Africa' affiliated to the opposition of America, Militant.

This committee condemns in strong terms the action of Thibedi (who had been expelled before the wholesale expulsion in the C.P. (S.A) and members have been applying on his behalf for reinstatement to the Party) for causing more confusion and division in the ranks of the African comrades by starting the new organisation known as the 'Communist League of Africa' which will be purely in the hands of Africans he claims. He is taking advantage of the mood of the disappointed members and outside Africans who have had interest in the work of the Party all along.

He does this whilst professing to support the committee in seeing that no opposition is formed and Branches are kept up. (Thibedi has been taken back by the members of the Laundry Workers Union as Secretary. They are quite

conscious of what sort of a man he is, but preferred him to members of the Federation).

Powerless members.

The members are powerless in all their efforts to carry on the duty of the organisation C.P. The opponents of the Party exploit the expulsions and ask why members of the committee should tell the audiences to join the C.P. whereas some of them had themselves been kicked out by the 'white' bosses of the C.P. which they say, as a party of whites, can never fight genuinely for African liberation.

Calling of conference.

Comrades, under the described conditions the committee thought it wise to call the conference which was very urgent.

Strong organisation needed.

It is true, a very strong organisation which will largely take up the national question in a proper form is wanted. It is true, the absence of reply from Moscow is delaying us from doing the work.

It is true that leading members are in danger of becoming indifferent. Masses of black and white are wandering up and down the streets begging for bread and work.

African masses in particular are in a ditch, no sympathy for them from any direction. They have been time and again disappointed by leaders of various organisations and they had come to the conclusion that the C.P. because it believes in 'direct action' will never disappoint them as other organisations have done. Now they are at a loss. Notwithstanding these facts the committee urges the Conference once again to be patient and give the Headquarters another try and only specify the time when will the reply be expected.

The committee very strongly appeal to members of this conference not to be overwhelmed by sentiments in dealing with such a situation as this.

~~In conclusion the committee recommend the attached Resolution to be endorsed by the conference.~~

For the Committee  
Garner Makabeni  
13-11.32.

RGASPI, 495/64/108/64-76.

Original in English.

Typed.

Stamped: 19.XII.1932 No. 8848