

matter. But their decision and procedure as stated in paragraph (a) of this¹⁴ letter remains the MASTERPIECE and the BEST DECISION IN OUR SITUATION.

Yours Comradely,
M.M. Kotane
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RGASPI, 495/14/346/61.

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**Minutes, Sixth Conference, CPSA,
5-6 September 1936 (Extracts)**

COMMUNIST PARTY OF S.A. SIXTH CONFERENCE HELD IN THE
TRADES HALL JOHANNESBURG. ON SEPT. 5TH & 6TH IN THE
TRADES HALL.

OPENING OF CONFERENCE 2.30 p.m. Comrade Basner.

Fraternal Greetings from CP France & CP Gt. Britain.

Our Greetings to Spanish CP.

CONFERENCE RISE AND SIGNS 'INTERNATIONALE'

Basner reads the CI RESOLUTION.

HE ANNOUNCES THE COMMISSIONS.

COMRADE KOTANE TAKES OVER AND CONTINUES.

[...]

Comrade Basner then called for a Presidium to be appointed and Comrade Thomas proposed the following names:

Comrades: Stalin, Thaelman, Thorez, Diaz, Prestes, Pollit, W.H. Andrews, Kotane, Ray Alexander, Nikin, October, Naidoo.

Comrade Alexander then proposed that Comrades Lapile and Mafutsanyana be added, which was agreed upon.

Comrade Basner moved that a Credential Commission be appointed and the following names were proposed by Comrade Murphy:

14. There is a typed-over word before 'this'.

CREDENTIAL COMMISSION: Comrade Fleet, Thebedi and Ray Alexander (Chairman)

Comrade Basner went on to say that he suggests the appointment of three (3) Commissions besides the Credentials. He said that although this was an innovation in S.A. in all other countries it was regular procedure. The three Commissions will be as follows:

1. POLITICAL COMMISSION: Task – writing of report. [...] He proposed the following names: Comrades Kotane, Mafutsanyana, Weinberg, Thomas and himself.

2. PANEL COMMISSION: This was another innovation in S.A. The duty of this Commission will be to take names of all people who will be named for the Central Committee, to go into these names, perhaps with the assistance of the Political Commission and the assistance of the old P.B. in order to have these names put forward to you for election. This was difference between social-democratic and Bolshevik practice, however, that if these names do not meet with your approval, there is no need for you to elect them and you can insist on other names. It will be the duty of this Commission to go into the history of every member named, so that a balance can be struck in the composition of the Central Commission and they will reflect every class of workers, trade unionists, factory workers, member belonging to Organisations for the native masses of the African Convention.¹ In our party we have many other factors which do not enter into social-democratic party elections. Therefore, the suitability of members must be kept in mind, also that it is necessary for old members to be elected, so that they can work with the new comrades that will come into the Central Committee.

The following comrades were proposed and elected: Comrades Lapile, Basner & Kalk (Chairman).

3. EDITORIAL COMMISSION. The duty of this Commission will be to edit these reports for publication, so that they will be printed without mistakes. The following were elected: Comrades Thomas, Mafutsanyana and Basner (moved by Comrade Wolfson).

Comrade Kotane then took the chair. He pointed out that three Commissions had been suggested and appointed. He suggested that the names of Comrades Ray Alexander and Gomas be included on the Panel Commission. Comrade Gomas also moved that Comrade Kotane should be added to the Panel Commission. These two suggestions were moved for acceptance by Comrade October and seconded by Comrade Wolfson.

REPORT OF CREDENTIAL COMMISSION: Comrade Fleet read out the names of members delegated by different parts of South Africa. Comrade Thomas then moved that a report of the composition of the Conference be given by Comrade Fleet at the end of the Conference, i.e. what Trade Unions,

1. All-African Convention.

Mass Organisations, employed and unemployed, native, Indian, etc. This was accepted and Comrade Weinberg moved that Comrade Fleet's report be accepted. Agreed.

REPORT ON POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: Comrade Mafutsanayana who gave this report, in introducing his report said:

'You are aware of the fact that it is a very long time since this Party has had its last Conference. Since then many changes have taken place in this country within the ranks of the Party itself and internationally. We meet here at a very critical period, the period which has been correctly analysed by the 7th Congress of the Communist International'.

Comrade Mafutsanayana then read through the whole of his Report. He then stressed the fact that especially in S.A. we are at the present in a very critical position. We find the workers divided, black and white, whilst the capitalists are utilising this fact to strengthen their rule. 'What are we going to do? How are we going to bring them together? Everyone agrees that we must organise the workers, natives and whites and others, but whilst there is no question that we must do so, we have to consider the prejudices existing, which resists the question in unity. Unity cannot be forced and when we are working on this basis we shall have to see how it is best to bring these together'. The first thing to do, therefore, said Comrade Mafutsanyana, is to rid the native of his fear. We must point out to him that it is not his fault nor that of the white worker that conditions are getting worse, but the fault of Imperialists, who are utilising this division for their own ends. We must put this question to the natives and whites and gradually we shall find that people will begin to lose that fear of a native speaking to them and addressing them in their own interests.

'We have attempted the last few weeks to give our attention to the Labour Party, but perhaps we have given too much attention to the question of votes, support, etc. We have to find out what kind of a Party it is. We must remember that the Labour Party has got the workers behind them. The composition of the Labour Party is the middle class, professionals – I do not say that we are not paying attention to them – but these are the people that we have to lead over to our side in the fight against Fascism and War. We here have the question, that Comrade Basner has touched on, the question of the Black Shirts. Everyone has noticed that in these elections the Black Shirts have made a big stride. I think I am correct in saying that the Black Shirts are more cunning than the Grey Shirts. They do not show antagonism, nor do they speak of their hatred towards the Jew, but when they speak they talk of the conditions of the people and how these conditions can be bettered. The Grey Shirts, however, speak of their hatred towards the Jew, Native and Indian. In fact, a comrade said that he could not make out, when listening to a speech by a Black Shirts leader, he thought he was supporting the workers. We must try and win the workers over to our side and we have to pay very serious attention to the danger of fascism in general. I should like to touch on the question of the League against Fascism and War. We must mobilise the forces to fight against the danger of War that is very imminent

at the present moment. The League did very good work for a year, but many mistakes have been made and the result was that the good work of the League went to pieces. We have to pay serious attention to the revision of this movement again. I would like to say a few words in connection with the internal situation here. I think Comrade Basner said very correctly that we must devise ways and means of building a Bolshevik Party that will be acceptable for leading the masses in this country. And this is what we have to do. When I say that I want to touch on the inner situation of the Party I mean that unless we have within the Party leadership that will be solid, that will stand together and point out the correct line, we shall not have a Communist Party. Therefore, the first thing we have to consider is the creation of unity and consequently the Bolshevik Party in South Africa.

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Address of J. Mpama to Sixth National Conference, CPSA, September 1936 (Extract from Conference Minutes)

September 1936

[...]

CONFERENCE REPORT.

JOSEPHINE MOFUTSANYANA

Much has been said and ground well covered. As communists we are popular for our speeches and we must also prove by our deeds. Comrade Welcome should not have left the Convention but should as a Communist have remained and shown the correct line. I am glad that Welcome is now a Party member. We have followed the A. Convention¹ closely and I am sure that it is the mightiest movement which will shock the ruling class. The fact that they offered a compromise on the Native Bills means that Hertzog saw the Natives were uniting to fight against oppression. We must work in the Convention and build it up. During the Abyssinian War the dockers in Cape Town were

1. Most probably, All-African Convention.