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B O L S H E V I K L E N I N I S T L E A G U E .
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154 Marshall Street,
Johannesburg.
23/1/35.

Secretary,
Communist League of S.A.
119 Hatfield Str,
Cape Town.

Dear Comrade,

At the last meeting of the B.L.L. the theses ~~the~~ and constitution of the C.L.S.A. were discussed; these have been in the hands of members ever since they were received by the League.

At this meeting it was decided that the B.L.L. is prepared to merge with the C.L.S.A. on the following basis:

1. That the name of the organisation should be the Workers' League of South Africa, or Workers Party of S.A.
2. That section three of article 4 in the draft constitution (relating to probation period) should not be enforced before the first conference of the organisation.
3. That the closest possible communication be established between the two branches.
4. That pending the first conference of the organisation, no programmatic declaration or major tactical decision shall be made by the organisation until the Johannesburg branch shall have been given the opportunity, not only to discuss and vote upon any declarations or major decisions, but also to circulate possible counter theses among Cape Town comrades before any vote is taken.

Apart from the change of name and non enforcement of the probation clause during the first few months, the B.L.L. accepts the draft constitution of the C.L.S.A.; the fundamentals of the accepted theses are also agreed upon by all members here except Comrade Purdy, who may submit counter theses disagreeing with parts of the theses.

Our reasons for wishing the name of the new party to be "Workers' Party" (or League) are briefly as follows: since we are no longer an opposition within the C.P. but an independent body, the main reason for retaining the name "Communist" is no longer valid. To keep this name is to create confusion among the workers and to repel those workers who have already had some experience of the C.P. Particularly among native workers, the necessity of translating everything we say creates difficulties enough, without adding to them by being compelled to explain the difference between Communist League and Communist Party.

It is true that in surrendering the word "Communist" we lose one of the traditions of our movement, but it must be remembered that the founders of the Third International were compelled to make a similar sacrifice in giving up the name Socialist or Social democratic which was part of the tradition of Marxism.

We have already experienced some of the results

of our being confused with the C.P. Our leaflet to tramwaymen was well received and roused the union to greater militancy, but many of the men believed it had been issued by the C.P. When we demonstrated with the laundry strikers in an illegal street procession, we were referred to by sympathetic bystanders as the C.P. The Lenin Club was included in the blame that followed the sale of "programmes" by the C.P. at the recent Pageant. They get the credit for our work, we get the blame for their blunders and crookedness. This state of affairs will continue until we make a sharp differentiation between the two parties, in name as in policy.

The name "Workers Party" has disadvantages, we must admit, but these are more than offset by the advantage gained in having a name totally dissociated from the Stalinists and clearly expressing to the native worker that we are the party of the workers. Our programme, policy and activities must do the rest.

In Zulu and Xosa our name will be Pati ba Abasebenzi, in Sesotho and Sechuana, Pati ba Basebetsi -- practically the same for all the principal native tongues.

As for the matter of the probation period, we do not think it desirable to erect any barrier against newcomers right at the very commencement, particularly as our party must remain a tiny unknown sect for quite a while to come. There is time to enforce a probation period when the danger arises of a possible dilution of our ranks through a rising revolutionary wave among the workers; until such a danger arises, it is best to keep the party doors open.

We ask Cape Town comrades to discuss our proposal for merging our groups and to keep in close touch with us while discussion is proceeding.

With Communist greetings,

R. Lee

Secretary.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Bolshevik Leninist League, Johannesburg held at 134 Fox Street on 7th Feb. 1935.

The meeting commenced at 8.15 p.m.

Present: Lake, Blank, Purdy(chair), Kahn, Lee(secretary). 5.

Correspondence was read from the Workers Party of South Africa (Cape Town) including minutes of the Inaugural meeting of the Communist League of South Africa, two communications from the General Secretary of the Workers Party of South Africa and a report of the proceedings in Cape Town leading up to the formation of the Workers Party of South Africa.

Com Blank, seconded by Com Kahn moved that the Bolshevik Leninist League hereby constitutes itself the Johannesburg branch of the Workers Party of South Africa. This was unanimously agreed upon.

Coms Purdy and Lee were elected members of the Central Committee.

Com Lee reported that there had been no meeting of the Committee of the Laundry Workers Union for two weeks. Arising out of this report there was a long discussion of Trade Union Policy.

The meeting concluded at 10 p.m..

Chairman:

Secretary:

Date:

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A REPORT

of proceedings initiated by the Lenin Club which have led to the formation of the Communist League of South Africa, hereafter, upon representations from the Bolshevik Leninist League, to be known as

THE WORKERS' PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

In August, 1934, a Committee, consisting of four members of the Lenin Club, namely, Comrades Averbuch, Burlak, Pick, C.van Gelderen, began the work of drawing up Theses to serve as the foundation of a Party Programme, the said Theses to be submitted in due course to a body of all those members of the Lenin Club desirous of forming a Communist League of South Africa, this body being referred to hereafter throughout this Report as the Special Body. Owing to pressure of other duties the work of the Committee went on but slowly. It was decided that three Theses were necessary, On Trade Unions, War, and the Native Question respectively, and later on there was added a Thesis on the Constitution of the Party. In each case copies were circulated among the members of the Special Body in time to allow of careful consideration before the Discussion and Voting.

4.xii.1934. On Trade Unions one Thesis had been presented by the Committee for the consideration of the Special Body, of whom 28 were present at the Discussion. The Thesis, with some minor alterations and additions, was unanimously accepted by the full 28 votes.

On War one Thesis, known during the discussion as Thesis A, had been presented by a minority of one (Comrade Burlak) and a second Thesis, known as Thesis B, had been presented by a majority of three (Comrades Averbuch, Pick, C.van Gelderen). The Special Body, of whom 29 were present for discussion and voting, adopted Thesis A by a large majority, 20 voting for A, 7 for B, while 2 voted Neither.

18.xii.1934. On the Native Question the Committee had sent in one Thesis, copies of which were duly circulated. At the meeting of the Special Body, however, 24 members being present, Comrade Averbuch asked at the outset to be allowed to be allowed to present a second "Thesis", which he had drawn up later. As it was not pre-

presented by the Committee, it could not be received as a second Thesis, but Comrade Averbuch was permitted to bring his paper forward as an amending motion. The form was not that of a Thesis, the opening being a lengthy criticism of the Thesis which the responsible Committee had presented. As the argument developed, it became evident that it could not be put as an amendment, since it involved a direct rejection of the Thesis. The Special Body decided, therefore to vote Yes or No on the Thesis before it. The voting was 15 Yes, 6 No (including two members of the Thesis Committee), while three of those present abstained from voting.

The Special Body thereupon proceeded to empower a Committee of seven to draw up a Constitution for the Communist League of South Africa. The voting for the Committee of seven was as follows: 14 Yes, 2 No, while 8 abstained from voting (these 8 including Comrades Averbuch, Pick, C. van Gelderen and H. van Gelderen). This Committee of seven was known as the Constitution Committee.

17.1.1935. On the 17th of January, 1935, the Special Body met for the last time to discuss and vote upon the Party Thesis and the Party Constitution, copies of which had been duly circulated among the members. Twenty-five members were present. The vote on the Party Thesis, including certain minor verbal changes, was 16 Yes, 9 No. The voting on the Constitution, to which one addition was made was 25 Yes, a unanimous acceptance. Those who had accepted the Party Thesis and the Constitution were permitted to sign the form of pledge for charter members. Nine forms were signed at once; two more were signed before the Inaugural Meeting which was held on 29th January.

Throughout the period August, 1934, to the end of January, 1935, the Lenin Club ~~held meetings~~ issued leaflets and held public meetings in the name of the Communist League of South Africa, although this body had not been formally constituted.

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WORKER'S PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA, 1933-1935

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