

South African Communist Party Documents. 1926

On the expulsion of Communists from the ICU

Source: extracts from Communist Party manifesto in *The South African Worker*,
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Transcribed: by [Dominic Tweedie](#).

Editorial Note: The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) founded by Clements Kadalie in 1919, had developed in the early years of the 1920s into the biggest African mass movement ever seen in South Africa, with branches in the main centres of the country and a membership estimated at over 100, 000 Communist Party members like J. La Guma and E.J. Khaile had played a big part in building up the ICU, and by 1926 four Communists were on the ICU executive, with J. La Guma its general secretary. By this time, however, Kadalie had started to come under the influence of white liberals, and his leadership began to falter as he turned away from militancy towards a policy of reformism. At a meeting of the National Council of the ICU in Port Elizabeth on December 16, 1926, Kadalie launched a furious attack on the Communist Party for 'interfering' in the internal affairs of the ICU and a resolution was passed by 6 votes to 5 that no officer of the ICU shall be a member of the Communist Party. Next morning La Guma asked what the position was of Communist Party members who were already officers of the organisation, and was informed by the chairman that they must resign either from the ICU or from the Communist Party. They refused to do either and on being told they were therefore expelled left the room singing the 'Red Flag' This was the beginning of the end of the ICU as an effective mass organisation in South Africa.

To the Native Workers and Oppressed Peoples of Africa.

To the Members of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa (ICU).

Fellow Workers and Comrades,

At this critical moment, when the Government of Hertzog, Roos and Co is planning new slave laws for the native masses of South Africa, traitors and dupes of the Bosses are trying to break up the only effective organisation you have which is capable of putting up a real fight against oppression and slavery — the ICU.

On December 16th the National Council of the ICU met at Port Elizabeth, but instead of deciding on a fighting policy against Hertzog's proposed slave legislation, Messrs Kadalie, Champion and Co., proceeded to destroy the fighting energy of the ICU by expelling the following members:

J. A. La Guma, ICU General Secretary.

E. J. Khaile, ICU Financial Secretary.

J. Gomas, Cape Provincial Secretary.

These three comrades were expelled for no other reason than because they were active members of the Communist Party.

They were not accused of not doing their work in the ICU properly. No! Every member of the ICU, including Kadalie, Champion, and others, knows full well that these three comrades have given their whole life and energy to the building up of the ICU. They were expelled because they belonged to the only political party in this country which has all along championed the cause of the oppressed native masses of Africa.

The Communist Party has persistently fought for a united front of all workers and oppressed against the common enemy, the capitalists.

The Communist Party was and is the staunchest friend of the ICU. It appeals to all native workers to join up and help to build a still stronger ICU.

The Communist Party is not in opposition to the ICU. It is a political party, whereas the ICU is a trade union. Nearly every member of the Communist Party is a trade unionist, and some hold office in the trade union movement. No other trade union has ever suggested that they should be expelled.

Comrades! You are told that one cannot serve two masters. Your expelled officials have never served two masters, but only one — the downtrodden workers of Africa. They have carried out their duties as working class fighters as no other ICU leaders have.

Who are the people who serve two masters? Kadalie, Champion and the other 'good boys' who seek to split your ranks in the midst of the enemy attack!

WORKERS OF AFRICA!

Do not allow 'good boys' and other boss-class instruments to get control of the ICU. Demand that Comrades La Guma, Khaile and Gomas be immediately reinstated.

Demand that your leaders take up a real fighting working class policy instead of relying on the capitalist law courts.

Down with the traitors who live on the sweat and blood of the toiling masses and insult those Native workers who with magnificent courage came out on strike for their rights.

Down with the 'good boys' Kadalie, Champion and Co., when they seek to break your organisation up.

Long live the unity of the oppressed working class.

Long live a united and fighting ICU.

THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1926/expulsion-communists.htm>