

# **Police reports of Robert Kadalie's speeches at the 1930 East London general strike**

The following speeches were given by Robert and Clements Kadalie, Peter Mkwambi and Pierce Sijadu on 6 January 1930. The report was found in 1/ELN 87 C3 Native Unrest (1930-1933) in the Western Cape Archives

C.I.D. Office,  
S.A. Police, East London,  
9th January 1930.

The/  
District Commandant,  
South African Police,  
EAST LONDON,

## **NATIVE UNREST AND NATIVE AGITATORS.**

Sir,

I beg to report that at 5 p.m. on Monday the 6th January 1930 I attended a meeting held by the Independent ICU at the East Bank Location. Robert Kadalie addressed the meeting saying ladies and gentlemen and the workers of East London, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you this afternoon. We are here tonight about the same usual reason, we want good wages from the employers as we are poorly paid. I am here as a delegate or an agent for my brother Clements Kadalie the Lion of the East, because he does not fear anything, he is sure about what he is saying I am very sorry that he is unable to arrive at East London owing to circumstances. I just want to impress upon your minds that we are oppressed by other men who left their own Country, of course I admit that we were bad, now I understand that we can develop on our own lines, but it is difficult to do so

since we are so oppressed by them. My fellow men of South Africa I appeal to you that you should not be afraid, we are fighting for you not by sword but by a sword of faith and we are hoping that in 30 years to come we will be able to conquer the difficulty under which we are labouring, provided that we make ourselves into one body and join the Independent ICU so that our wages should be increased. I beg to withdraw Mr Chairman.

At 10 a.m. on 7th January 1930 meeting was held in St Phillips hall, East Bank Location, East London by Independent ICU.

Mkwambi District Secretary of Independent ICU Johannesburg addressed the meeting, he said our people are being arrested and that is due to these men (referring to European Constable who were present) we have long been crying for better wages for years but in vain. The whiteman is ruling us that I admit, the fact is, that we have been good to them and we have been working for them. Now they have got fine buildings, good Railways, good Harbours and good ships. I am quite sure that the native has to be employed by poorly paid. These people want us to be well cultured, they want us to be religious etc, but they are not Christians themselves, had they have been our grievances would be listened to. The Colour Bar plays the most important part because I personally have passed my Book-keeping examinations, advanced but can I be employed by Mosenthal & Co as a book-keeper, no and I know it. My people of South Africa we must stand on both feet and try our level best to fight against this difficulty we are facing. I for one I am sick and tired of the bad treatment and I want to draw your attention to the fact that we should join the Independent ICU and pray to God to help us.

Sijadu, Chief Organiser of Johannesburg was the next speaker, he said Mr Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered at this particular place for

the same old reason. I am ishologu of this movement therefore you should listen to what I say. I a man of experience. First of all, I would like you to sing a song, and this it 'Yopi ka yefika imini gomgivebi'. We have come to kindle a fire which has been burning already, and I pray that before I die I should do some good for you people of South Africa and we are giving blessing to Kadalie that he should carry on his work successfully. These whitemen are no going to do him anything at all. A man who is against Kadalie, let him go away. You people just please consider our application and give us better wages, you have oppressed us, we are debarred from carrying on our business, you make us carry passes where ever we go. God sent Moses to Pharaoh to release Israelites, but the King of Egypt refused to do so, Kadalie has been sent by God to teach the native people as to how to live a happy life. We thank these whitemen that they taught us many things. We have got Ministers, Teachers and they have given us education, but they have not given us money. If you catch a dog by its log and flog it, it will make a noise, I am quite positive that unless you join the Ind ICU you will never be prosperous and you will not get what you want.

At 10 a.m. on 8th January 1930 meeting continued in St Phillips Hall, East Bank Location, East London.

Clements Kadalie addressed the meeting saying - ladies and gentlemen we are prepared to put a stop to Pirow's rule, Pirow say that the Independent ICU should not be allowed to hold meetings whatever and I think that the Government should be respectfully requested to put a stop at this. If our complaints are not listened to, I am quite sure there will be bloodshed in South Africa. Pirow's rule is a very bad one, even Satan himself cannot do this sort of thing. What we want is freedom, we are oppressed in the same

manner as the slaves. We are prepared to die with our children if this Law of Pirow's is in action. We are oppressed badly. The whitemen have stolen our Country and our forefathers land. These men are not treating us with the consideration which we are entitled to expect. We are fighting for the natives of South Africa. Pirow want[s] to cause a misunderstanding and hatred amongst the natives and if the Government will not comply with our request, I am ready to give up and go back to my own Country. We want freedom in Africa. It is high time that a native should develop on his own lines. It is better that we should die rather than to lead such a life. We have long been obeying or rather we have obeyed these men for many years, but no improvement. They do not pay us well now therefore I come to the conclusion that we should come together and fight for salvation. I prop[o]se that Pass Laws should be abolished, and if the Government does not comply with our request, well then in the near future we are going to see that all Passes must be burnt, and will be done before the 30th March 1930.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

[Signed Claridge Qwele Native Constable]

The following strike meeting was led by Clements and Robert Kadalie, Alfred Mnika, Alexander Maduna, Henry Tyamzashe, Pierce Sijadu and Peter Mkwambi on 12 January 1930. The report was found in SANA JUS 922 1/18/26 Native Agitation Reports On (1928-1929): Part 24 April 1929 - Jan 1930.

CID Office,  
SA Police, East London,  
13th January 1930.

The/  
District Commandant,  
South African Police,  
EAST LONDON

### NATIVE AGITATORS AND NATIVE UNREST

Sir, I beg to report that at 11 a.m. on Sunday the 12th January 1930, I attended a meeting held by the Independent ICU at the East Bank Location, East London, about 1,000 native men, women and children were present.

Clement Kadalie opened the meeting by singing the native National Anthem, followed by a short prayer by the Local Chairman Alfred Mnika.

Clement Kadalie then commenced his speech by informing the gathering that a meeting had been held by the so called citizens of the Location yesterday afternoon there being about 40 men present, the object of the meeting was to find out what our resolutions are which we have passed. The District Commandant has also interested himself in trying to find out all about our doings. He has told his messengers that they have got to tell him first thing tomorrow morning (Monday) if we are going to strike or not. I want to put the District Commandant in his proper place, the Police are paid

to detect crime, not to interfere with meetings, the Police are blood thirsty. That want to kill us. The District Commandant of Police thinks he is speaking to the natives of 1910, he has no right to say to us, Kadalie has no right to come here. I am going to tell the DC in plain English whether he likes it or not, he has got to be put in his damn place. If the Railway workers are not paid the minimum wage of 6/6 per man, we are going to have a strike this week. Kadalie then called on all the Railway workers who are in favour of a strike to show hands, (about 50 hands were raised) Kadalie definitely explained to those present that it was only the Railway workers that were going out on strike, not the Dock boys. He explained that the Railway workers did not come under the Wages Board Act. There are over 900 workers in the Railway workshops at East London and in order to force their hands to pay higher wages, I am going to instruct you when the time comes that you are not to go to work but to stay in the Location. We are writing tomorrow to the System Manager of Railways to give 12 hours notice that unless higher wages were paid to the natives, we would call a strike. We don't fight like Pirow did at Durban, we are not cowards, we tell them what we are going to do. I tell you now that [if] the minimum wage of 6/6 per day is not paid we will call a strike. Kadalie asked those present if they all agreed, several voices shouted out we agree. He then told them that he was going to be the General, I have made many strikes in this country, we have got to be orderly not to walk about the streets, you must stay in the Locations because if you loaf about the streets and be disorderly they will bring you to the Police to shoot you down. Tomorrow evening I want you all to attend the meeting which we are going to hold near the football ground. The 15,000 who went on strike at Cape Town in 1919 listened to me which soot the Government 32,000,000 my advice to you is to organise your friends. I want

to make it clear to you that we are not going to fight with sticks, the others has aeroplanes and guns, we have to fight peacefully. A strike will start in East London and go right through the Country. I want all of you to pay your subscriptions so as to keep those out on strike because if the strikers are hungry they will steal and there again the trouble will start. He then called upon all the committee men to go round with their hats to make a collection the sum of £3.0.2 was collected.

Maduna was the next speaker, he commenced by condemning the churches and said that religion was responsible for the backwardness of the native races. I do not say any of you have not to serve any religion because the natives cannot be a nation without a God. Kadalie has just informed you that the District Commandant was here yesterday to find out if we were going to strike I want to tell his representatives here that if we dont get larger wages we are going to strike. The POlice are blood thirsty, as an example when you people at Port Elizabeth asked for higher wages in 1920 Captain Halse deliberately provoked them to trouble and shot them down in cold blood, and at about the same time Captain Halk had a native shot down in cold blood at Port Shepstone and in 1922 strike at Johannesburg both of these men were shot down, they are both dead, and if the District Commandant of East London shoots the natives here we will to find someone to shoot him, these men will have to answer for their sins to God, he said what is more glorious to die once than to live for ever. We have been in the bonds of slavery for 400 years, and if out blood can buy our freedom let us die as far as the Dutch people are concerned we are prepared to fight them tooth and nail, because they are the descendants of the Huguenots. Today they have got their freedom and yet they dont want us to have our freedom. I tell you that

people who are under paid have to carry passes and pay Poll Tax are nothing else but slaves.

Tshamzashe was the next speaker, he said, I only want to remind you of one thing, Hintza our King he died a mysterious death, he was shot in cold blood, my heart is sore, I want you all to be sore about that. He was in the water when he was shot by a whiteman in cold blood. I dont say you must retaliate, you have civil rights, listen to Kadalie, sit in your houses, put your sticks under your beds and strike passively.

At 3-30 p.m. at Makambio's Hall.

Mahluli was the first speaker, he commenced his speech by saying that he wants to tell the natives and whitemen what he thinks of them. I want to tell you about the harm caused between the white and black. The natives in this land are suppressed by the whiteman, early this morning you were told what to do by Kadalie. I want to advise you to unite into one body. You must leave the churches, churches only teach you to be soft, Kadalie must organise this movement in these Territories before he can hope to make it as successful as we would like to be. I want you all to read a report in the Rand Daily Mail dated the 11th November 1929 re the burning of Pirow. Kadalie is right when he tells you that there are hundreds in Joburg, the crowd was very hostile on that date and they would have burnt Pirow in hell. Listen to me when God is cross with Pirow he will kill him. Kadalie has made a new race of us, he must organise properly and you must listen to him, there are a lot of blood[y] Boers who have still to go to their graves for what they have done. We will get the buggars.

Robert Kadalie was the next speaker, he said I want to speak to you on one subject of courage. I dont think you know what it means. The whiteman did



have courage, or they would not have come to this land. Kadalie asked you this morning to be ready to strike, you have no courage. I was at a strike in Cape Town, there I saw the courage of those men, if you have courage like them you will succeed, they got 8/- per day. It was only through their courage. The Police went to the Locations and told them that unless they went to work, they were going to be shot down. I saw it, but they told the Police that they were not going to work, they had the courage. If we strike tomorrow you will see the whitemen will bring guns to frighten you. I tell you now that you must have courage, no harm will come to you, if a whiteman tells me to go to hell, I tell him to go to hell also. The District Commandant will bring guns and aeroplanes tomorrow only to frighten you, have courage no harm will come to you. If Kadalie tells you girls not to go to work, you must not go, have courage, let the white people do their own dirty work. The white people will pay you £1 per day instead of doing their own dirty work, you must have the courage, of the strikers of 1919 in Cape Town. The natives there told Smuts to shoot them as he did at Port Elizabeth. If the whiteman gives you a black eye, you must give him one also, we are not going to be shot down any more, we have some one behind us, the white man has forgotten the ten commandments which say 'Thou shall not kill' they keep on killing.

Sijadu was the next speaker, he said the year 1930 will be turned into a revolution unless we get what we want. I ask you all to pray for Kadalie, because I am not going to set him free. After referring to dreams which he has had, he said that as soon as the natives of East London were out on strike invisible messengers will be sent to Zululand and elsewhere and also to Geneva you must not be afraid. If you dont strike passively you wont get money. Pirow has already commenced to moderate his Sedition Bill

whitemen are more afraid of blackmen with the stick than he is of God. I have not let loose Kadalie yet, if I do it will stink of shit. I am only sorry that the resolution which have passed does not allow me to call the natives of Joburg also out on strike.

Makwambi was the next speaker, he said, the whitemen have all the vices possible, he went on to condemn the churches and said that the Ministers are all rogues. The Boers have robbed us wholesale, the Court of Law are unfair. Many a innocent native has been convicted because he does not understand what has been said to him, or perhaps in the manner in which the questions have been asked by the interpreter. If Christ was not amongst us, we would be fighting now, it is time we woke up, we have been ill-treated long enough and it has got to stop.

Mlimi was the next speaker, he said, the native races have come to a terrible plight, they have even followed the white in so far as leaving the children in the streets, all vices which the natives have learnt from the Europeans. I tell you I am pregnant, but not with white child. I am pregnant with the grievances of Hertzog and Pirow[']s laws and when they are born they will have to go one way or the other. The white people want to rob us of our Country, we must and will have our share. The white people are all cowards, they could not stand up to three shots. I am assuring you that we can even bring down the aeroplanes with our supernatural powers. Men and women stand up and follow us, you will hear of our doings on the Rand. If we were only to realise our strength we would not be ruled by 1(1/2) million, better to die than to live the life we are. The Boers are all rebels, they are all faint hearted.

Clement Kadalie was the last speaker, he appealed to all the natives to be orderly when the strike is called.

Signed S.D. Mandy. Det Sergt.