

**Letter from S.P. Bunting to L. Gibarti, League Against Imperialism,
[October 1927]¹**

Abs:² Central Executive Office
4 Trades Hall
Johannesburg

The Secretary L. Gibarti
League against Imperialism and
for National Independence.

Dear Comrade,

In a communication from yourself to J.T. Gumede some weeks ago touching on the work of the League against Imperialism, you draw attention to the fact that John Beckett, M.P., Executive Member of the League Section in Britain, was paying a visit to South Africa. You stated that Beckett would be only too willing to do all in his power to assist in the development of the work of the League during his sojourn here. Unfortunately expectations in this respect have not been realised. Right from the moment of his landing in South Africa, Beckett made it clear that his visit was solely concerned with certain private personal business matters.

When he arrived in Capetown he was met by a number of comrades who are interested in seeing the League progress and develop, but he could render them no assistance whatsoever. In due course he came to Johannesburg, and the Secretary and Chairman of our Party made it their business to at once get into contact with him for the purpose of asking him to assist in taking steps to bring about the formation of a committee that would devote itself to carrying out the programme of the Brussels Congress. It was pointed out to him that if he took the initiative in calling a meeting of sympathetic trade unionists and other elements, then in all probability the setting up of a committee pledged to carry on the work would result. Mr. Beckett could not see his way clear to do so.

He informed us that the tactics of the League has undergone considerable change in some respects and that it was no longer thought advisable to press for the affiliation of the native workers organisations, until such times as the white trade unions had linked up to the League. He was of opinion that it was no use attempting to set up a committee composed of European and non-European elements in this country as such effort was meantime out of the

1. The date established on the basis of the contents of the document.

2. Abs. – Absender – ‘sender’ in German.

question owing the local circumstances. In accordance with this view he, therefore, took no action in the matter.

Again, too, although Beckett responded to an invitation of the EC of the SA Trade Union Congress which invited him to address them, he failed to urge the TUC³ to devote more interest to the question of the League's programme and policy. At a meeting of Trade Union executives in Johannesburg a few days later which he attended, the Brussels decisions were kept out of the pictures altogether.

In general one might say that although Mr. Beckett's visit created a very favourable opportunity for arousing interest in the League's work, such opportunity was wholly and entirely lost owing to his woeful apathy in the matter. We draw your attention to this matter because we think it important that you would be made aware of the great laxity which Mr. Beckett showed. He never, so far as we were aware, even visited the native workers organisations in order to get their opinions and now he has left for Europe again without once having interested himself in raising the League's policy to the fore.

Yours fraternally
S.P. Bunting

RGASPI, 542/1/18/59-60.

Original in English.

Typed, copy.

Stamped: 2202 - 28 October 1927.

(in German)

Inscription: Copy (typed).

3. British Trades Union Congress.