

## **Militarism, Socialism and Pacifism in South Africa 1910-1915**

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By 1914, the South African Labour Party (SALP) and trade unions had become a major force in South African politics. This labour movement was militantly anti-capitalist, but also stood for racist protection of white skilled workers. On the outbreak of war, the SALP leadership split between those for and against the Botha government's support of Britain. The anti-war faction initiated the War on War League (WOWL). The key members were those in the labour movement leadership who were attracted to syndicalist politics. The WOWL did not succeed in attracting mass support for its views. The most important group to emerge from WOWL was the International Socialist League (ISL). Because the ISL later became the main component of the South African Communist party, there has been a strong tendency in the historiography to see the WOWL as a step to the party's formation. But as Lucien van der Walt has shown, the ISL for most of its existence was more syndicalist than proto-communist. The paper will build on this insight to examine WOWL in its own terms, as a movement which was part of the global anti-war agitation. In addition it will locate the WOWL's activities in relation to the local context of armed rebellion of Afrikaner nationalists in 1914. It will suggest that the war, by catalysing a break away from the SALP, helped produced a new 'non-racial' position in South African politics.