

LMN/001/0001/30

15/03/63

49, Belmont Avenue,
Oranjezicht,
Cape Town.
15th March, 1963.

Dear Max,

Many thanks indeed for your truly comradely letter. Your offer of assistance is by no means sentimental, but very practical -- but more about that later.

The police still have our cash book in their possession, but checking back on our receipt books since 1st December, 1962, I find that we received the following amounts from that date to this:-

£25 received 18/2/63
£32.6.7 received 22/2/63
£100 received 7/3/63.

It is now certain that Spark will have to close down as a weekly as from the end of the month. Whether it will continue to appear as a fortnightly or a monthly after that date depends on the solution to quite a number of problems now under discussion.

There are two reasons why we cannot keep going as a weekly: we cannot find, from amongst a very narrow field, anyone sufficiently experienced who could (a) exercise the necessary political judgment and (b) be able to avoid the innumerable legal minefields now strewn across an editor, publisher or printer's ~~path~~ path. The second reason is that the printer (and we don't blame him) to take the very heavy risks attached to continuing to print Spark (without someone experienced at the helm) (is not prepared)

I had a whole sheaf of banning orders served on me last week. The only thing missing is a 'house arrest' one which, I've no doubt, will come sooner or later. The orders that have been dished out now create all sorts of problems, including personal ones.

Brian and I are also worried about the staff and what is to happen to them. We shall be lucky if, at the end of this month, when we pay them off, we shall be able to give them the full amount for March, let alone 'notice' pay! We would very much like to give everyone at least a month's extra salary to help see them through until they find alternative employment, but will not be able to do so unless our friends make a special effort to assist.

Seeking employment with our disabilities and in the atmosphere of fear which now exists, is a thankless task, as I have found through

You are for specific details of the problem involved with regard to staff. There are 24 of us (including long service full-time sellers who have stuck by us through thick-and-thin, and who risk endorsement out as soon as they lose their jobs with us.) The total monthly remuneration is R1359 (£679.10.0).

Closing down presents its own particular problems. We shall have to find, from somewhere, enough to settle our commercial debts which, as at the end of the month, will amount to two months normal running expenses. Our assets (mostly office furniture of ancient vintage) are a drop in the ocean and our circulation debtors are going to freeze onto their sales monies once they know we have closed down. It will be the devil's own job getting it out of them.

if
So, as I say and as things stand now, it looks as if we shall have to throw everyone onto the street as if they were employees found rifling the petty cash! We knew that this might well be the position. The threat of it has been hanging over our heads for years now. It was a risk we had to take and took with full knowledge of what we were doing.

Nevertheless, it is sad that it should happen. Some of the staff have served the paper for almost 20 years, which is a very big slice out of a man's working life. And the wages and salaries we have paid have never been sufficient to enable anyone to build up a nest-egg out of them!

We are in for a very difficult time. The activists are being put deliberately through the wringer, as an object lesson for those bold enough to think of following in their footsteps. Vorster boasts that he has taken the gloves off and that he intends to make it tough for all 'subversives'. There will be little mercy shown in the present phase of the struggle, which sharpens in intensity with almost every passing day.

We would certainly appreciate it if you could organise assistance -- but remember that we shall also need money for other purposes! As long as legal possibilities still exist to disseminate news and information they must be exploited. We shall have to find the cadres to do so.

Because of the uncertainty as to what may happen here at the end of the month, it would be best to address your reply to my home address unless, of course, you post your letter in good time to reach here before that date.

With best wishes to all,

Yours,



personal experience during the last few weeks. People don't touch us with a barge pole and some of us have special difficulties in even getting to them for interviews.

Take the following example: I applied for a job as bookkeeper/accountant and discovered that it was at a factory. I was the first in the running and the boss was prepared to see me first thing in the morning. The orders served on me, however, prohibit me from entering any factory premises, so I had to make a special application to the Chief Magistrate for permission to interview the prospective employer.

When I saw the Magistrate he said that he himself could not take a decision. I must make a written application and he would then refer the matter to higher authorities; his hands were tied. By the time my request was granted (and then only to the extent of proceeding to that particular factory to see that particular employee) it was of only academic importance -- the post had already been filled.

One chap I saw today, the head of a very big concern and by no means unsympathetic, told me bluntly that I didn't stand a chance with his outfit. They had once taken on an African and been bearded by the Special Branch as a result. The Board of Directors had then taken a decision not to employ any named, listed or banned person.

We shall, no doubt, find alternative employment sooner or later, but it is likely to be in categories imposing a severe drop in income, at the beginning at any rate.

(continued next letter card)