

**Letter from S.P. Bunting to Secretary, ECCI,
3 November 1926**

Central Executive Office
4, Trades Hall,
Johannesburg.
3rd November 1926.

The Secretary
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E.C.C.I.  
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Moscow.
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Dear Comrade,

We desire to remind you of our recent appeal for financial assistance, more particularly in connection with our printing press. This, which was founded in 1919, has been maintained all these years with great difficulty, and a year ago it



was decided that it must be enlarged as the only alternative to closing down. This was done and new plant was purchased, but we were not able to raise enough to pay for it, and are still about £750. in debt over it, apart from instalments on a new linotype which we have so far paid out of profits, – for the business now pays current expenses with something over to go towards the printing of our organ, the 'S.A. Worker', which we need hardly say does not pay for itself. If we could pay off our load of debt and have a little money on hand it would remove a millstone from around our neck, and we should have built up a permanent source of strength to our movement, and one capable of eventually paying off all its debt.

There is a special reason, however, why we apply to you now for funds. Our press has for a number of years past been obliged to conceal from the public its communist identity. Our manager, who has been in charge ever since our press started, has appeared before the world as the proprietor of the business, although actually only a wage earner. He has brought in a good deal of work, indeed the bulk of the work, from customers who would indignantly refuse to give it if they knew it to be a communist press. He has also lent some £300 towards the cost of plant, and reckoning other claims, e.g. for holiday pay, bonus for overtime, etc. he is a creditor of the business for about £400. Although not a communist (no communist has been available for the position) he has played his role of camouflage (which a communist could not have done), and generally served the interests of the Party on the whole very faithfully, bearing the brunt (and the discredit to himself) of dealing with creditors who during the past few ~~weeks~~ <sup>months</sup> especially have made themselves very importunate, as though he were personally the debtor, besides putting in a considerable amount of overtime in order to keep the business going, so much so that he is to a certain extent suffering from nervous strain, often resulting in extreme irritability.

This, coupled with the usual white worker's antipathy to blacks, has resulted in extreme friction between him and the representatives of the I.C.U. (Native General Workers' Union), who brought their paper to be printed at our press. He has very seriously insulted them on a number of occasions, and finally he has refused to print their paper any longer: and it is now being printed elsewhere. (There has also been constant friction between him and us on other matters).

This is a state of affairs which we as a Communist Party, of course, cannot allow to continue, especially as we are the only friends of the native workers in S. Africa, and several ~~weeks~~ <sup>months</sup> ago we decided to dispense with his services as soon as a suitable substitute could be found. Two obstacles, so far insurmountable, however, have prevented this decision from being carried out. In the first place to remove the manager will at once disclose to the public that the business is after all not his, and this will mean at present the loss of most of our custom (for the custom from Labour bodies is insignificant except the printing of a Labour Party paper which is given to our



press on the express assurance that the C.P. is not interested in the press!), resulting in the collapse of our press and consequently of our weekly paper, the central activity of our party, for we cannot afford to print our paper elsewhere. But even if our manager could be replaced by another without disillusioning the public as to the proprietorship, the second obstacle is that he would of course take his dismissal unkindly, and he has in fact declared that if dismissed he will at once sue for his £400. (which indeed he wants paid even if not dismissed), and we cannot risk our plant being sold in execution of a judgement for this sum, nor can we raise the money or anything near it.

Matters are thus dragging on at a deadlock, and meanwhile the I.C.U. has naturally taken up a hostile attitude owing to the refusal to print its paper, although other causes (counter-revolutionary influences, etc.), are certainly contributing to that hostility, and this particular grievance is to a certain extent being merely exploited to excuse that hostility. Nevertheless it is clearly our urgent duty to remove any such excuse.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from pressure by all other creditors, therefore, we very urgently need £400. in order to be able to pay off and replace<sup>2</sup> the manager as soon as we can discover a suitable successor and a suitable occasion for installing him without disclosing the true position to the public (even then we still run a risk of the ex-manager himself disclosing it out of revenge, but we do not think he will do this).

We, therefore, ask you for a loan of £1000 (one thousand pounds) which we would hope to repay by instalments spread over five years beginning from January 1928, out of the profits of the press.<sup>3</sup>

Will you put this before the Committee and advise us as soon as possible whether and to what extent you can help?

In reply please communicate with our 'representative' here:-

Mr. A E KAHN  
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Box 5778
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Johannesburg  
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Yours fraternally,
THE COMMUNIST PARTY (SOUTH AFRICA)⁴

S.P. Bunting
~~~~~  
Secretary.

RGASPI, 495/64/48/1-4.

Original in English.

Typed on the letterhead of the CPSA.

Stamped: 3629 - 30 DEC. 1926

(in German)

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1. There is a single line in pencil in the left margin opposite this paragraph.
  2. There is a single line in pencil in the right margin opposite the part of this sentence beginning from 'very urgently ...'.
  3. There is a single line in pencil in the right margin opposite the first two lines of this paragraph.
  4. Stamp.