

C O P Y

Robben Island Gaol,
ROBBER ISLAND,

20th October, 1964.

My dear Benjie,

Thank you indeed for both your telegrams. I needed the assurance about my family and, as a father, I was happy to know you had succeeded in getting birthday cards for my autochthons.

I subsequently received a letter from my wife, dated the 24th September, followed by a telegram. But the letter of the 10th September to which she refers, I have not received.

And I want to take up this matter of my mail with you today with whatever matters may be relevant.

You will no doubt recall that I have been complaining ceaselessly about the (to me) inexplicable delay in my mail, almost from the very moment I got here. I thought I would stick it for a while, believing the arrangements to be temporary in any event. But it has proved not to be. And now that letters from, first my children and then my wife, have for a reason unknown to me been apparently held up the possibilities are, to say the least, disturbing.

Now, Benjie, it is my contention - and I have given the matter my most serious thought - that neither the Minister of Justice nor the Prison Authorities have the right, under any published law or regulations, deliberately so to delay my mail as to render nugatory my right (granted under their own regulations!) to write and receive two letters a week.

The reasons for their actions are not my concern. The Administrative arrangements they make to achieve their purpose are not my concern either. But I do want to be convinced by a Court of law that the rights I have referred to can be reconciled with such restriction. And it is not unavoidable, this delay, Benjie. I have been a convict, as you know. And I never had reason to complain about mail delays.

I, therefore, want you please to take up the matter with Ernie and get his opinion. My intention is to appeal to court for a "definition of rights". I don't know how one presents that in court. But the idea is to remove the caprice and whim that appear to define my relations here.

Any information you may require about the contents of the Minister of Justice's notices to me, my wife will, I am sure, be able to supply. And should you require an affidavit from me, on whatever aspects of my stay here you consider relevant, I shall, of course, be only too happy to oblige.

/I read...

I read that Ernie intended to leave the country but I believe it should be possible to get the services of somebody else equally good.

We have to establish the purpose of censorship and, in the case of so-called subversive material, who is to decide whether words are subversive or not - a Court of Law or a civil servant? Has that civil servant a right to withhold my letter because he thinks it contains subversive material? These are but some of the questions one would like settled by a court.

I shall not comment on the events in Europe. I want this letter to deal specifically and exclusively with a "definition of rights":

Well, Cheerio Benjie,

Yours sincerely,

(SIGNED) BOB

P.S. Now that the Socialists are in in Britain I am almost sorry I cancelled subscriptions for "Time and Tide". It would be a pleasure to read their spluttering fulminations against Cullaghan!

PP.S. I received the watch - thanks.

BOB.

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