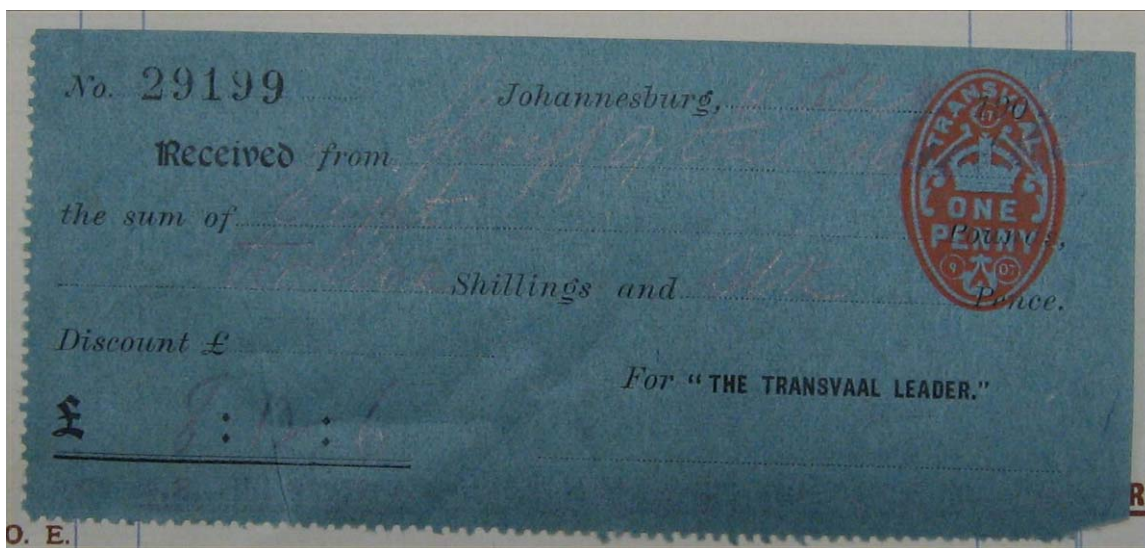


Letters to the Editor: The TRANSVAAL LEADER

Dear Sir

My previous article *Mafeking "good fors" and 1d. revenue surcharge* [Forerunners 2007;57:48-50] refers.

Recently, whilst examining the papers of a deceased estate in the State Archives, Pretoria, I came across a cash receipt issued by the *Transvaal Leader* in 1905 (illustration). The Revenue Stamp immediately caught my eye and I thought that it may be of interest to your readers. Unfortunately, I have no expertise in this regard so am unable to furnish any information related thereto. As a sop though, I have written some notes on the *Transvaal Leader* which may compensate.



It was not until the discovery of gold at Pilgrim's Rest in 1873 and later Barberton in 1884 that the commercial possibilities of developing a newspaper and printing industry in the Transvaal were seriously explored. Amongst the welter of publications that followed were the *Transvaal Leader* and the *Star*.

In 1899, Sir (James) Percy FitzPatrick was instrumental in founding the Johannesburg morning newspaper, the *Transvaal Leader*. As with much of the English language press in south Africa at that time, it was financed by Rhodes and Wernher-Beit and Company seemingly with the objective of stirring dissent, through which it was hoped to further the capitalist ends of the mining lobby and imperialistic ambitions of Britain.

In the months preceding the onset of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the provocative editorial styles of Robert Joshua Pakeman of the *Transvaal Leader*, and William F Money Penny of the *Star* were impertinent and profound. Methuen was to write that "the South African Press became a manufactory of outrages" for, determined to force the war issue of Milner and Rhodes by any means, Uitlanders' grievances and countless

small points of friction perpetually were magnified out of all proportion.

Seemingly as a *ruse de guerre* intended to rattle the cages of the Uitlander body, and citing as his rationale "fragrant and provocative untruths", JC Smuts, then State Attorney in the Kruger government, amongst others ordered the arrest of the two editors. William F Money Penny, prewarned, avoided arrest but Pakeman did not. This action caused such an outcry that Smuts, totally unabashed, subsequently publicly distanced himself from it. Pakeman was to die in 1906.

From early 1906 through to 1909, Mahatma Gandhi used the columns of the *Transvaal Leader* to communicate to the authorities and the populous at large that the British Indian community of the Transvaal "simply demand(ed) the most elementary of civil rights of its government". Curiously, in January 1908, JC Smuts had Albert Cartwright, then editor of the *Transvaal Leader*, act as his agent and visit Gandhi whilst in jail in order to represent his views. The rest is history and too long to recount here.

When established, the *Transvaal Leader* took over the plant from the defunct *Johannesburg Times*. In 1902, the newspaper was bought by the Cape Town-based *Cape Times* and survived until 1914 when, in terms of a friendly agreement struck with the *Rand Daily Mail*, it closed.

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