

J.C.W.S.

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# 120 laid off as Star newspaper folds

By JAMES SUN

Hongkong's only tabloid newspaper, The Star, was closed down last night and more than 120 employees laid off.

Both the Chinese and English editions of the newspaper, printed and published by Consolidated Newspapers Ltd, have folded.

Dismissal letters were delivered to the staff in the company's Laichikok office at about 10 pm as they were preparing the newspapers for today.

The dismissal letters sign-

ed by the general manager, Mr Edward Hung, gave no reason for the closure of the newspaper that has claimed an increasing readership in recent years.

The Star was Hongkong's first tabloid newspaper and was founded by an Australian journalist, Mr Graham Jenkins.

Last night, Mr Jenkins said he was shocked to learn of the decision.

"I'm shocked and disappointed," he told the SCM Post.

He founded the Star's Eng-

lish edition in 1965 and left in 1979 as editor — after 14 years' service.

It was his decision to add the Chinese edition to the newspaper after the 1967 riots.

The closure comes almost 10 years after the folding of another English language newspaper, the China Mail, which ceased operation on August 17, 1974.

The Star's employees are expected to meet today to ask for negotiations with the management.

They will get one month's

salary and severance pay in accordance with labour regulations.

The chief editor of the English Star, Mr Ken Martinus, said he was shocked when he received the news.

He was forced to call journalists at home last night to tell them the news because many had finished work.

Mr Martinus said many of them thought it was a joke.

He said the staff might meet today.

Mr Martinus said he had received no prior indication of the closure.

He said it was sad to see a promising newspaper stop publishing. The Star had recently recruited new members to its editorial department, he said.

A senior reporter contacted at her home early this morning said: "I couldn't believe it."

She said she would seek help from the Labour Department.

Efforts to reach Mr Hung, or Miss Aw Sian, the owner of the Star, proved fruitless last night.