

March 24, 1971

Dear Art;

This note will not get to you in time for the discussion on the paper ---your letter arrived only today after I had already sent a note in reply to both John R and John S whose letters came Monday night special delivery and ~~Monday~~ Tuesday--- I have already told them that I do not see the paper decision as a very decisive one from the information at hand and your letter leaves me of the same opinion.

I have also told them that I do not understand the politics of the minority. I have no information on this. If they are taking their line from the French you can expect very shortly that they will be the strongest supporters of a youth organization and advocates of a youth paper. I gather from Vergeat that this coming convention of the League will see the formal constitution of a youth movement. They are now publishing a youth paper on a monthly basis.

You ~~are~~ have a short paragraph in your letter "you saw a little of it when you were here but that was but a sample; demoralization and cynicism spontaneism and mindless activism; opposition to the key movement building activities, hostility to our press and its sale, opposition to the full timers who with others constitute a bureaucracy, the English Canadian wing of the movement has nothing to teach us --combined with some anti-English currents. On the key questions this is the line that carries in the youth!"

I am not sure what I saw with regards to the minority tendency. I attended a meeting of leading comrades where there was much concern expressed about ~~the~~ cafe gossip against the fulltimers and I recall also there were some complaints about a somewhat useless expenditure of resources on leaflets that we were unable to use. So I saw cynicism, cliquism and I do not know whether the leaflets were a product of mindless activism or not. Is that spontaneism?

How can the above type of problems be solved. I don't see how "withdrawal of the perpetrators of these policies can solve this. So they key minority-ites who promote ~~this~~ this atmosphere are removed from the youth milieu but they meet the youth at the forums, at restaurants. So this crap comes back to you through the mouths of innocents. What are you going to do--lay charges against those who corrupted the morals of the youth. I can only see some kind of witch-hunt...of a perpetual character. I suppose you think you can handle this in the league. Aren't they going to corrupt new league people

The problem it seems to me is that you have a clique--and really there just aren't any organizational actions that can solve this problem. This cliquism ~~is~~ current would best be undermined if the few French Canadian comrades we have recruited became a real leadership...Jean H Manon, Andre and we moved in such a way as to establish them as the leaders

Of course we have a lack of cadre in the youth field--and in the league. But I think that the overriding problem is lack of leadership period....we have not developed a leadership team that is an expanding

operation that is developing and has the possibility of assimilating new forces. That seems to me to be the problem. We are no closer to solving the leadership problem now than we were six months ago than we were a year ago and possibly before that. The problem is not solved by sending in new cadre. The cadre has to be developed out of the situation as it is now--where we have some very able dedicated highly active comrades who represent a movement that has established a tradition and built up a lot of good will.

I think that we should think about the current problem along this line--there is nothing new in the picture except that the ~~headquarters~~ minority took a devastating defeat at the convention--that the French and the international know this and they know they know it--and ~~they~~ the minority really doesn't have a line. The French who may well be intellectual inspirers of the minority don't have out concept of building a movement--a concept of united front activities--but I do not see how that causes us any particular problems in Montreal. We have the majority in the LSO, a core in the youth. So what can the minority do--get us into some actions that don't take us anywhere? Well the worst is that they may exhaust some young people but we are there you know and you have the pan Canadian movement.

I think there is a real problem of leadership in the majority. This is the big urgency now!!! Withdraw the minority. Yesterday there was another big urgency--Manon come on staff. We have a crisis operation in Quebec and have had one for some while. For some time it was expressed in the term priorities---this and that could not be done because of priorities and also of course because of peculiarities of Quebec.

For instance what are we doing about April 24? Right now I am supposed to be writing up an inspiring directive to Bombay, the Phillipines and Togoland to move on April 24. Why the majority here is favoring this now is the great victory being scored by the Vietnamese and there is a big developing mood they cannot ignore and they are going to move with it. Not united fronts, no serious long range work--an action. The minority as distinct from them has a strategy on Vietnam---but we have never had it in Quebec. The entire leadership in Quebec has had the international majority--the Mill line. We can or cannot do it --determined by priorities. That was a very bad article in the last issue of Labor Challenge but I gather we are doing an all out job on Vietnam--leaflet into the unions building actions, posters meetings etc. What are we doing in Montreal? I hope I am wrong--I hope that we are really moving into the movement that is, one again coming up around this---I saw it of course at the time of the invasion while in Montreal. Are we pushing into the united front. If we aren't take it from me--THE MAJORITY IS NOT GIVING LEADERSHIP.

How do you explain that the headquarters when I arrive at the height of the trouble is decorated with all those stupid gun posters from Cuba. Don't we have a line. How can you explain a sign on the wall francais seulement. Worse still when I want to take it down some comrades of the majority--excellent comrades don't even understand what this means--That to me is the minority line--was for years. How do you explain the incident about Arnie ~~xxxx~~ just an incident--and the fact that we are doing nothing--absolutely nothing about work in the English language area--and comrades it seemed to me on their own--Tara and Marilyn had to push me into McGill?

How do you explain that there can be a crisis amongst comrades who have worked together for years, have no substantial differences--around the YS?LJS convention-- I should say not only comrades but longstanding and even personal friends.

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When I left Montreal last I was deeply concerned about Penny who while she really developed from her experience around the "trouble" now seems to me to be in somewhat over wrought--ever ill. And of course I was considerably concerned about the effect this might have on you Art. But overall I went away with some confidence from ~~the~~ seeing Alain in action. Here is a guy with real initiatives, real energy intelligent, seems to have assimilated our ideas --who will take a lot of the pressure off Art and with him we will be able to build a team operation--a real leadership.

What is the urgency you talk about ? Is it Manon reactions to the situation. But after many experiences with Manon I myself never really felt that she could cope with the challenge we thrust upon her. Where does Alain stand on the situation whatever it is

You see I am not at all sure that I disagree with Colleen. And it is not at all a matter as you phrase it exaggerating or not exaggerating the danger. Of course this minority is absolutely poison, rotten and we all wish we were rid of them. I think we have the majority-- everything favors us So we don't get involved in the mindless activities, the exhausting actions they might propose--we don't carry their spontaneist line whatever this involves We disagree with them, argue against them sometimes sharply, sometimes make the record, sometimes we may lose a vote ---but we are the majority The question is--how does the majority act and does it move towards solutions ---does it have any-- solutions--- for instance I am struck by what appears to me lack of assimilation of Jean H and Andre's

from

So you have projected a solution--- withdrawal of the minority of the youth .

Will they accept being withdrawn--how is that going to be implemented how is it to be motivated ~~through~~ You say nothing about this. You now have national committees in youth and League. I would suppose you propose to do it through the League. And since I assume they will not want to leave their cosy circle ~~it~~ you will have to pass a motion which will motivate their being withdrawn. It seems to me that you may be faced with a split--that they will say no, then when you move to discipline them --expell them I take it--very serious for the LSA-LSO both Quebec wise and Canada wise they will appeal or if they figure there is no use (Mike will tell them what the pan-Canadian leadership will be thinking about this difficult situation and whether it can be used to promote a crisis in the pan-Canadian movement) they may just pull out and set up a new youth organization--- take what they can out of our group. So then we are free of them inside but we may well have something on the outside giving us a running trouble for a period--until I suppose as you must hope they die off--which they may not.

Don't you really mean--expell the minority..Do you really think they are withdrawable. From where I stand I don't think so--so I would prefer to use the word that correctly describes the action...We are going to expell a minority which seems to me to have less and less a political line and more and more has become a clique which says nasty things about us and before young people who come to our movement for basically political purposes and we are the political leadership--unchallengeably. My impression is that the minority doesn't really play much of a political role and possibly the strongest element in their armament is that with the leadership is primarily English.. Once ~~xxxx~~ a person develops some real revolutionary consciousness this is not too powerful a prejudice to work on but it can have its first effects

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If this is the big problem then I am all for using the money that we had for Manon and taking hold of Andre and dragging him along and up---and if this is out Jean H---as they are--make something out them--really devote sometime to this

Dont think lots and lots of Trotskyist branches and movements have had such a problem as you have. We had it in Toronto with Rose--we had it with Engler. They have it right now in the US--with Ralph Levitt Barry Trainor and with the Garza&s/ These comrades are causing all kinds of trouble for as you know they are able. But they haven't been expelled and for good reason in my opinion.

Because I dont think expulsions in these cases solve anything at all but make the million more troubles. There is no disagreement on the difficulties you face, no misunderstanding on the urgencies and I dont think ~~xxxxxxx~~ any lack of understanding that the movement in Quebec cannot be build in the exact same way as in the US or the rest of Canada.

What I would like to hear is what permits us to think that this is a solution in the light of the world wide experiences of Bolshevism?

But then again maybe you use the word Withdrawal adviseably--I see John uses it too. So it really is that I am out of the picture.

At anyrate here are some opinions for your consideration.

comradely

Ross

And what are you doing about Penny---I am quite disturbed. I am not so worried about the atmosphere of blackmail she creates in the meetings but about her personally, her health and political well being. She really grew on the basis of that experience and showed what real stuff she is made of. Something must be done if there has not been a change since I saw her last