

July 18, 1972

Dear Colleen [Levis, Montreal]

Alain [Beiner] brought in your letter re the minority defection. It came first as we were preparing a statement for the info of the movement. It could brook no delay as the gossip was spreading. After hearing your letter we called what was as close as we could get [to] a bureau meeting and the letter was read and discussed.

None of the comrades agreed with you but in the process of the discussion some matters were clarified.

For instance Alain said the split was “necessary” and justified. I told him I did not know what he meant – the split is a fact. They justify their action. I expressed my surprise at the action, but also said [*illegible*].

But the reality is that I was pleased.

In attempting to comprehend your view I suggested that perhaps you are seeing the whole thing from the point of view of the international dispute and their splitting on the edge of the convention [which] of course blocks this discussion which is to go on willy-nilly, from a full development and settlement in the Canadian section. The matter is not settled by their action. Only in part you might say – again – that is all outside of our control now.

There is an aspect of the matter that perhaps you overlooked however. What we have had is a disloyal tendency that no matter (*what*) our efforts, made it very difficult if not impossible to have a rational discussion on the questions and dispute. In that they are a disloyal tendency (have sabotaged the work of the movement at every turn) I am not at all sorry that they have left. They weren't in any way taking us into an honest discussion of the differences. In fact [they] were so poisoning the atmosphere that they were actually a block to anyone coming seriously to grips with the differences – that they are only carrying into the Canadian section.

We want to react coolly – but also to defend the movement.

Their action is a crime against the movement. Those who are in the leadership have to make that known – and draw a sharp line between the movement and them. We can give nothing to any concept that you can play around with this matter, that the unity of the movement is not important. All the more that they were the nucleus of a tendency which has formed connections elsewhere. We have to tell those persons what we think of persons who split from the movement – all the more in that we are on the verge of a convention in the preparation of which we took a whole series of actions in violation of our norms in order to do everything possible to get at the politics.

I do not recall if you have seen their statement or whether you are aware of a talk that Art [Young] had with Terry H-S. Everything points to this having all been worked out so that they can confront us and the International with the question of establishing a situation in Quebec

where there would [be] the LSO/LSA – the official section -- and they a sympathizing section. This would be a totally unacceptable situation for us. To end [all] possible illusions about such a thing we must in my opinion sharply separate ourselves from them.

We are not dealing with revolutionists – Trotskyists – who have a difference with us that the whole movement would benefit from their having a chance to experience in carrying their line in action. They are an unprincipled alliance of elements who have never really carried the line of the majority of the Canadian movement. Trotskyism even if you could stretch it to encompass them, never has and isn't going to learn from them anything of a positive character. They are now a source of confusion in the Quebec Left for us. If they have the energy and they probably do – they will have a paper. They will probably appear shortly with a number of the X-s and other opponents of orthodox Trotskyism.

We are going to have to mark ourselves out from them – demark ourselves from them. Any appeal for unity is incomprehensible and shortly [*text ends*]

Comradely,
Ross

Minority splits from LSA/LSO

by ROSS DOWSON

Executive secretary, LSA-LSO

On the eve of its pan-Canadian convention and in the midst of the pre-convention discussion, three members of the Unified Tendency in Montreal have split from the League for Socialist Action - Ligue Socialiste Ouvriere.

Best known of the three is Michel Mill, whom the LSO ran as its candidate in a by-election in Bagot, in December 1968. Heading up a tendency at the 1970 LSA-LSO convention Mill was elected as its representative to the Central Committee. On the international report at that convention the tendency's voting delegate abstained, but the tendency's statement defining the area of its abstention put it in support of the report's position on both Latin America and on China and the cultural revolution.

Since then, along with others, the Montreal tendency widened the area of their definition with the submission to the pre-convention discussion of five documents including one on Latin America and another on Quebec.

These documents were being

discussed in the LSA-LSO and arrangements were being made for their spokespersons to present their views through the branches when the Montreal grouping of the Unified Tendency bolted.

This splitting action follows on the heels of a whole series of incidents which are now clearly revealed to have been attempts to provoke the leadership of the League into taking disciplinary actions against them in order to uphold the norms of a serious revolutionary organization.

Last summer the tendency went so far as to formally declare a boycott of Liberation, the monthly paper that reflects the views of the LSO. In the last year they publicly violated the LSO's policy on building the anti-Vietnam war movement and its strategy in the women's liberation movement — and to top it off they have not paid their minimal contribution dues since December.

Throughout the recent upsurge in Quebec, with the general strike of the public employees and the radicalization of the three labor federations, during which the LSO was straining every nerve to par-

ticipate in and intervene in the struggle with its views they absented themselves. They presented no opinion as to how the LSO should respond and in no way aided the LSO in its intervention. They attended no league meetings all during April, May, and June.

The leadership of the LSA-LSO did not react to these flagrant provocations, in an attempt to assure that a full discussion of any and all questions in dispute could take place, unencumbered by organizational and disciplinary disputes.

However its restraint has proved to have been completely in vain. By their own volition the three, and nine supporters in the Montreal Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes-Young Socialists, have placed themselves outside and in opposition to the Canadian Trotskyist movement and thereby in opposition to the worldwide Trotskyist movement, the Fourth International.

With this split they have violated the highest principle — the unity of the world-wide forces of Trotskyism.

August 22, 1972
334 Queen Street West
Toronto

England

Dear Allan and Connie

Sorry that you did not manage to get up here for a short visit. I was really looking forward to seeing you both after such a long gap. I had decided long ago not to go to Oberlin--not only because of the many things I am trying to do--you can appreciate that it is not exactly a staff workers holiday--but because I am pressing other leading comrades here to move in on these things, to get them to really know the leading SWPers and meet the various international personalities which for many years has been left to me. They --John R, Gary P, Dick F had all agreed but then at the last moments pulled back. But I see that Joan N, Darrell F who has undergone quite a developments and some others went --And I hope you had the opportunity to discuss with them

So you missed our camp again--and all the worse as it is now at last really moving. Jim Mitchell has really banged back into the movement and with a crew of four comrades over this summer has stayed out there and transformed it. We must by now have about 9 sleeping cabins, an excellent baseball diamond with backstop, a volley ball court, badminton court, horseshoes etc. The lodge has been panelled the well is operating. ..and we have had two extremely successful weekend schools of almost 100 so far

And of course you missed Crescent unless you had an opportunity to talk with Coral Sloan. This fall Crescent should take off. I am in the process of writing Brian Belfonte's doctorate so he can pull together a pile of money painting in NY and then come up and take the operation on the road. The doctoral thesis is on the revival of the Marxist leftism which the university might publish so it is worth our while. Brian is what we need to move out with our terrific agency set up--NLB, Merlin, Monthly Review, Pathfinder and Vanguard. A beautiful stock arrived over the last couple of days and we are just about ready for the campuses to open up. Then too you would have seen that we have taken over more space here at 334. We have kicked out the poll hall and set up a fine central office operation and layout print shop upstairs. We have taken over everything but about 2,500 sq feet which we will be wanting in about 1 1/2 years. But man and woman doesn't live by bread alone

I am sure you must be wondering what is happening here--what with the withdrawal of the ~~program~~ program for Quebec national liberation and the PC's announced intention to redraft the political resolution that it had presented, and the postponement of the convention, the discussion on our youth press etc etc. In my opinion John R and Naomi must not return to Europe this fall--a big step back for our international plans --but must stay here in order to pull together this leadership we have been trying to build here. Probably we will be able to replace them with Art and Penny--Penny has matured over the past while and Art I would think is ready for action after his stay in Halifax over the past year

We have a big leadership problem here. As a pan-Canadian force it went through a big crisis during my last absence. One of main aspects is that there is nothing between me (as an individual--in the US they have a score of my generation) and the Riddell generation. And while we have a fine group of comrades of the Riddell generation who do good things they have proven not to have formed a team and in my opinion have not really moved in and taken real leadership responsibilities. They have left it to me. Well I am pulling back and forcing them forward. The experience is somewhat shocking but I know of no other course. We are making mistakes but generally we have been rectifying them. The Quebec document posed some new problems--the question of a Quebec labor party and the meaning of the PQ experience which ~~xxxxx~~ they haven't answered yet but are coming to grips with. John R and others have pulled back on the liquidation of the youth paper and a weekly LC --this weeks PC meeting will see the product of their re-thinking which will generally be ok. There is only one important political difference that has been revealed--that is around this continuing and widening anti-U.S. imperialist sentiment--but what is involved here is not yet clear as they have not presented their amendment to the political resolution.

There is some tension and some anxiety but there is no question whatsoever that we are coming through it. The foundations of the movement are well laid and hard even if the superstructure at this time is a little soft and tremulous. The comrades in the Toronto East branch of which I am a member ~~xxxxx~~ did a job on Walter Davis and another member of the Revolutionary Communist tendency when they tried to make something of the convention postponement. They fully understood that the RCT's -- purely factional and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ destruction of the younger comrades.

And we are just coming through a experience with the Waffle that is proving very salutary. The established leaders Watking and Alzer at the first whiff of grapeshot have pulled out of the NDP to build what they are calling a Committee for an Independent Canada. Our comrades have led the struggle to stay in the NDP and fight the social democratic and TU brass. Just prior to the conference in London last weekend which saw the consumation of the split a preparatory meeting was held to re-establish a socialist caucus. A whole group of former ultra lefts who we had been trying to educate turned the meeting into nothing but eulogies for the LSA--how it had been correct all along etc etc. If we did not know better we would have thought that they were trying to put the Trotskyist label on the caucus so that the right wing could proscribe it along with the LSA.

of Red Mole

The recent issue with the unsigned attack on the Healy group for its entirely correct line on the labor party came into the store just in time for it to be picked up by our Old Mole-Red Circle tendency in Waffle and up at the U of T. You can be sure we brought this item to their attention--they have been heavily influenced by the IMG. The Red Mole article caught them at a good time as they have been moving away from this whole position within the NDP and the struggle with the Laxer-Watkind splitters. The IMG'er who turned up at Fredericton and was immediately inducted into the tendency circle was not too impressed with ~~the tendency~~. A young Fredericton comrade told Art that he ridiculed the tendency after attending their meeting as not having the guts to split. IMG'er Ted Harding was back in Toronto last month. He moves quite freely amongst some of our ex's and our tendency but hardly does more than call in on our headquarters. We had him give a forum on the opposition inside the USSR. In the course of his speech he led me to believe that he supported individual terror in the USSR. Well, Tariq transported the Argentine line to Quebec and the Ernest-Gisela contribution in reply to Joe laid the basis for guerrilla action almost anywhere bourgeois democratic norms did not prevail, so it is not surprising that someone would apply it to the Soviet areas. Peter Horbatiuk when Ted went a little deeper in reply to my point ~~raised the whole question~~ raised the whole question right out into the open and very boldly. Ted waffled. So I made a short contribution that if there was anywhere our position was defined it was in the USSR. That is just what Stalin accused us of --conducting a campaign of terror and assassinations in the 1930's and Trotsky responded in great detail with the Marxist viewpoint. Ted was particularly uneasy about the whole thing and you might hear about it

Which takes us to the Mill split-away. The Cdn section has been a prison for some years for Mill and company. The only thing that kept them in was the international. What's changed. I Maybe they got some bad advise when in England. More likely Mill has succumbed ~~xxx~~ to the pressure of the forces that he has around him both within the movement and outside it They are all really though with the LSA/LSO. ~~xxxxxxx~~ They have been trying to p ovoke us into expelling them--but we havent to their apparent consternation. Our impression is that they were intending to appear at the September convention with an organized group and seek recognition as a sympathizing group a-la-Argentina--and possibly they even thought that their supporters in the world movement would put real pressure on us to accept such a status. Our feeling was that the ~~split~~ RCT within t.e league is in reality a division of labor agreeably arrived at. Possibly the postponment of the convention has made real difficulties for them for they are all through with the league and time is against them---those in the league further wasting their time and those outside on some considerable pressure to move and tell us their full program in a press and organization of their own.

I read all the material that you sent over on the IMG congress--I thought that the tendency's documentation was as usual of a high order. It was a real break that they published a bit of a synopsis in the Mole. I hope you have lots of copies on hand to present to anyone who wants to know what you are doing in that operation. Poor Pat Jordan--a sad picture. What is he doing now! I see Healy has beat us to the punch with a super bookstore. Well your sales should go up. No doubt the congress firmed up the tendency considerably . Very good--for it seems to me from afar that we dont know where the IMG is going

But I must drop Toni a line--she sent me a long and interesting letter a week or so ago. I gather that she has come through it all now. Met Mary up at the Orillia branch where she gave a report on the IMG ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ but I did not have a real chance to talk to her.

Drop us a line when you have the time.

warmest regards

Ross

August 22, 1972
334 Queen Street W
Toronto

Nottingham

Dear Tami ^(F) and Frank

Oh to be in England as the class struggle continues to mount.

It was good to get your note---all the more that Alan and Connie had to cut their trip to Oberlin short and not come up to see us here in Toronto. I pressed others to go to Oberlin so that I could hold the fort here. Of course we had Mary here--I attended the Orillia branch meeting where she gave a short report on the IMG congress ---but I haven't as yet had a chance to talk with her personally. And she must be leaving shortly. She came right in to George and Bea's place in Richmond Hill which is now an operation of its own--with its own headquarters and much stepped up activity. When the north Yonge subway gets the Finch about 1 1/2 years from now it will siphon the crowd right into their headquarters doorway.

Yes, big developments with the Waffle. All in all the split initiated by Laxer and Watkins is a setback for the left as a whole. But a new left will be constituted on quite a wide basis and on much better terms--freed of that old elitist leadership. Our capital has risen considerably. A week before the last Sunday's split conference we pulled together key forces to ~~summarize~~ lay the basis of a new left caucus. The air was full of eulogies about the LSA, how we had seen things correctly--how our analysis of the NDP was the only correct one. It was so much and coming from such wide forces--Steve Fenner and others--that I was beginning to suspect that it was a plot to ~~summarize~~ get the NDP brass to proscribe the new caucus as they have proscribed the LSA. But they all meant well.

The London conference all prepared by Watkins-Laxer to split the operation was a big success for us--we got at least 140 persons to the caucus meeting and left Watkins-Laxer without any of the key forces. It is probable that the new ~~Summit~~ Movement for an Independent and Socialist Canada won't even get off the ground. Of course Peter H played a big role at the conference, along with Hans M and a new woman comrade of ours, Liz Barclay--a really able popularizer and educator. I haven't heard a detailed report yet--our branch meets tonight. But the LC coverage will no doubt be very full.

I will remind Peter to go around and re-establish connections with Don. Don should really move into the riding association there. It is one of the better ~~SW~~ ones in the Toronto area. It is 100 % pro-Waffle---well 99 % as Brewin is a member and candidate-elect. Bruce Kidd who was the provincial candidate is a leading Waffler ---when I last heard he was supporting the Laxer-Watkins line. His wife is better. What the Waffle split does for the Woodbine riding I do not know. I have the distinct impression that Don did not renew his subscription to Labor Challenge--did he say anything about our press.

Yes, Connie and Al would not have known about the Mill split until they got the paper. Of course it was not completely unexpected by us. Mill and company have actually been outside our movement for a long time--the timing of the split suprised us ~~hmm~~. The only reason why Mill has remained inside our movement is the international situation. He has long been under pressure of various persons around him--some who have never been in our movement and others who are drop-outs, to pull out of the LSA. Perhaps this pressure finally became too great--then again it is not at all excluded that he got some bad advice from some of the IMG leadership. Our impression is that they may well have decided ~~that~~ to try and set up something like Argentina---an official section and a symapthizing group---they carry the line that the LSA is much more degenerate than the LSA and of course the longstanding position of theirs that ~~the LSA is much more degenerate than the LSA and of course the longstanding position of theirs that~~ (this idea has some support from Pierre)

not exactly giving leadership these days--in the face of the Bolivian debacle and now both the terrible toll that the Argentine bourgeoisie are taking of our ERP comrades and the successes of the Moreno forces.

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I passed your comments on to Liz Angus. It is good to hear your comments about ~~the~~ our paper. I am awfully close to it here and it is interesting to get a longer view. It is paralyzing that we do not have a British press. It is hard to follow developments over there from the Star and G and M which of course give better coverage than that NY Times. I am hoping that some solution soon comes to this problem--as I know you are all. The odd time I take time out to scan 'ealy's paper--I can hardly bring myself to bother about the Mole--but feel compelled to a bit because its the inspiration of our tendency

I read the key documents of the IMG conference that came over. --and thought that the tendency came through very strong. Cant understand Pat and Toni's actions. From here it would seem that the IMG could blow up at any moment--or that at any time anything can happen. The pressure for the regroupment of all who consider themselves Trotskyists is a big challenge in England--it confronts even the sectarian and opportunist elements. Yes it would seem that anything could happen in England. All the more with the rising tempo of the class struggle. I gather from a few comments that we are able to live in the IMG ~~at~~ these days

It is good to see that you Toni are back on the job again----I suppose you Frank continue to increase your influence among your work mates and the union.

warmest regards

Ross